

## **Reasons People Don't Seek Therapy**

**by Lisa Mustillo, LCSW**

For many people the thought of psychotherapy brings up feelings of fear, denial and apprehension. There are often thoughts of "I can take care of this myself" which keeps people from investing in their mental health. What many people don't realize is that seeking therapy is an essential example of self-care and can transform lives. Our mental health is the foundation of how we relate to others and live our lives, yet many individuals decide to avoid seeking help. Below are some of the reasons people don't seek psychotherapy or counseling, and why they may want to reconsider.

### **"I don't have enough time"**

There is no doubt that we live in a high paced, demanding world that leaves us little time to focus on taking care of ourselves. Managing the responsibilities of family, work, or school can be completely overwhelming and making time for psychotherapy seems impossible. Seeking help with understanding our distressing emotions becomes another task to add to an already overflowing plate. When people say that they don't have time for therapy, I explain that therapy is actually a way of improving how we handle our time. It is an emotional tune up that gives us a safe and empathic place to express the thoughts and feelings that keep us feeling overwhelmed, anxious or depressed. In addition, psychotherapy/counseling gives us coping strategies that enhance our ability to manage our chaotic lives. The healthier we are mentally and emotionally, the better equipped we are to handle life's demands. Most therapy sessions take place once a week, and last anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour. When we look at the big picture of life, spending one hour a week on our mental health seems like a smart investment. It is an investment of our time that has wonderful and transformative returns.

### **"I would not feel comfortable talking about personal issues with a stranger."**

The foundation of psychotherapy is the relationship between you and your therapist. This therapeutic alliance is built on compassion, empathy and trust. I believe that the true healing of therapy takes place through this relationship. With each session, you and your therapist develop a mutually respectful bond that makes discussing and exploring your painful thoughts and feelings less frightening. You now have a compassionate collaborator to accompany you on your journey. Psychotherapists and counselors are not only thoroughly educated and trained to help you process and understand your emotions, but most of us have entered this field because we have a sincere desire to help others. We have witnessed the transformative nature of psychotherapy and we want you to experience its healing power. We want you to understand that with time and trust, the once feared stranger can transform into a therapeutic ally who no longer wants you to battle your pain alone.

### **"I can handle it myself."**

Many of my clients have admitted that before seeking therapy they were convinced that they could handle their issues by themselves. They were caught in the "it's not a big deal" trap and it kept them from truly living a satisfying life. Eventually they realized that they deserved more. They deserved to finally get the help they needed. They deserved to be happy and satisfied. When individuals convince themselves that they don't need help understanding their feelings, they are likely fearful of confronting their pain. They avoid seeking help and continue the cycle of pain – denial/avoidance – repeated pain. The truth is; there are some struggles that you can't handle on your own. This does not make you weak or needy or overly sensitive. It makes you human. It means that you are suffering. By letting go of the notion of "I got this" you are finally saying that you no longer want to suffer alone. By making a commitment to therapy or counseling you are saying that you want to make a change, and finally live a life of peace.

### **"I don't want to talk about painful subjects."**

Discussing the painful aspects of life can be difficult, but suppressing these thoughts and feelings only makes them stronger, louder and more distressing. Avoiding painful thoughts and feelings is like holding your breath;

sooner or later you will need to gasp for air. Psychotherapy gives you the opportunity to breathe. It provides a chance to discuss, explore and examine the thoughts and feelings that are keeping you in a cycle of shame, anger and pain.

When we verbalize distressing thoughts and feelings in therapy they often lose their power. We are finally able to process our sadness or anger and start to move forward in our lives. We suddenly find that by saying the unsayable we regain the part of ourselves that was lost, and we are finally able to breathe.

### **“I don’t want to be judged by others”**

Although psychotherapy is gaining more and more exposure and acceptance, some people still feel shame about seeking help. There is a fear that seeking therapy means you are unstable or weak. This could not be farther from the truth. The reality is that it takes tremendous courage and resilience to reach out for help. It takes strength and guts to face the painful or frightening emotions that we sometimes prefer to keep buried. Confronting the emotional or mental roadblocks that keep us from living a fulfilling life is an act of bravery. When you seek help for your mental and emotional health, regardless of how you will be judged, you are making you and your mental health the priority over the opinion of others. You are saying that the fear of stigma does not outweigh the importance of emotional well-being. You are saying that you want to live your life to the fullest.

As you can see, the reasons why people don’t seek psychotherapy or counseling are strongly connected to fear; fear of making a time commitment, or fear of sharing their pain with another. People convince themselves that they can handle their issues alone, and feed upon the fears of expressing their pain and being judged for doing so. By seeking psychotherapy or counseling, people are saying that they no longer want to suffer. They are stating that they want to flourish in their careers and relationships. They want to understand themselves at a deeper level and develop self-compassion. They want to enhance how they live their lives. They want to breathe again.

Attento Counseling is a local North Atlanta, counseling and life coaching practice with locations in Marietta (East Cobb), Marietta (Downtown), Cumming/Alpharetta and Kennesaw. We provide therapy, counseling and life coaching to individuals with a variety of life struggles. We are a group of empathic and dedicated mental health professionals who believe in the transformative power of therapy, counseling and life coaching. We are devoted to providing high quality services in a compassionate and professional environment. Please visit us at <https://attentocounseling.com/> to schedule an appointment and to learn more about who we are.