

# Keys to the Couch

## 5 Things Your Therapist Doesn't Want You to Know

**Matthew Thornton, Ph.D.**



An eBook of [www.mindfortherapy.com](http://www.mindfortherapy.com)  
Email: [mindfortherapy@gmail.com](mailto:mindfortherapy@gmail.com)

# PREFACE



This book is not intended for therapists, but can be used by people seeking therapy as a thought provoking source. This is an Absurd eBook of the website [www.mindfortherapy.com](http://www.mindfortherapy.com), and should be taken, like everything a therapist says, with a grain of salt. It is meant to poke fun at the mystification of psychotherapy and the insane application of scientific methodologies to the complexity of human life.

All that aside, it must be said at the outset that psychotherapy is beneficial, with most outcome studies showing between 75% and 95% success. So this is not a book that seeks to deter you from entering counseling. It is meant to simply give you perspective.

# Key #1 ~ Life is Perpetually Changing.

The biggest factor in the success of therapy generally has nothing to do with the therapy. While this may not defy logic, in the simplest terms, circumstances changing outside of therapy generally play the largest role in the outcome. Life is constantly swirling, shifting, changing, and evolving. The nature of circumstances can change in a exploding instant or slowly evolve outside your awareness. The variables are too complex even to imagine, and it would blow your mind if you tried.



## What does this mean for you?

You should fully embrace the idea that no matter how stuck or lost you feel in this moment, things will change. So get yourself prepared and more over don't get in the way of things changing. The central tenet of one school of therapy is that "the very things people do to solve a problem tend to maintain it".

Everything is always changing. Look out your window and you can see the evidence of this throughout nature. Imagine for a moment the dim gray skies of winter. Now as you are imagining this dreary scene, begin to see that sky transformed to blue with the coming of spring. So take a deep breath look hard at what you are doing to solve the issues in your life, and make sure you are leaving room for the natural processes of change.

# Key #2 ~ What is happening makes perfect sense.

Your thoughts, feeling, and even behaviors have a tendency to naturally fit within the context you are in. That means, if you are depressed about losing your job, your spouse leaving you, or your financial struggles, you probably should be. That may sound harsh, but your body reacts naturally to your surroundings and circumstances. You get anxious in a dark alley, because there is the potential threat of danger. You react naturally.

Let us take on the idea of depression. Much of the mainstream propaganda treats depression as a chemical imbalance and those that experience feelings of depression as some how out of whack. To think of depression as simply a chemical imbalance is shortsighted and potentially dangerous. For example a woman who is recently separated from her husband of 12 years because of infidelity is now faced, as are many women in this dilemma, with the prospect of poverty and single-parent hood. In such a situation her body both restricts and increases the flow of certain chemicals. Does she have a chemical imbalance? Or does the chemical makeup of her body mirror naturally the dynamics of her very real social crisis? By expanding the explanation to include the context, we are able to see very clearly just how appropriate her thoughts and feelings truly are.

Now that we have established that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this woman, we are free to turn our attention to shifting the context surrounding her. This logic can be applied to any difficulty, whether it be anger, anxiety, behavior problems, or otherwise. No matter how confusing or strange, given a full view of the circumstances most things make perfect sense. This however does not mean that we leave things as they are.



# Key #3 ~ Therapists Have No Idea What They are Doing.

Let me clarify, therapists have no idea if what they are doing is helpful. The times when therapy is help, we can't truly identify what was actually helpful about it. Don't let it stress you because, as I mentioned earlier, the research is in and therapy is consistently helpful across the board. But what is helpful about therapy is still up for debate. There are an unbelievable amount of different schools of thought about what should take place in a therapy session, how the therapist should act, what should be said, how it should be said, and so on and so. Most therapists tend to pick out of the hay stack of different approaches based on what fits best with their own personal style. While there is nothing wrong with that inherently, it can led to the therapist trying to fit a square peg into a round hold. The best therapists view therapy as an art and find themselves, along with their clients, inspired by creative moments of healing.

So what should you look for in therapy?

Does it progress? Does the theme of therapy seem to shift? Do you experience a sense of movement with each session? These are questions you should ask yourself. Therapy needs to be going somewhere. If you want to get out of the stuck place you are in, the conversation needs to have flow.

A therapy session should be full of life. I don't mean that every session should be a joyful walk in the park. It should be rich with experience. Full of the pain, tears, laughter, fire and passion that you need. Boring therapy won't create the momentum you need to move. It doesn't have to be fun, but you should be interested in what is happening. Come on, we are dealing with your life.

# Key #4 ~ The Problem isn't the Problem.

**“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”**

**Albert Einstein**

Wow, just let that soak in for a moment. Not only is he stating that we have some part in the problems that we are facing, but that in order to solve them we have to change the problem itself or at least how we are seeing it.



Our current culture is obsessed with feeling good, to the point that when you feel bad it is seen as some sort of diagnosable pathology or disorder. Hurt, pain, death, grief, and loss are vital parts of life. We have devalued our suffering and in doing so we have turned it into a monster. Before long, those that suffer become monsters, lepers to be avoided or sent to the hospital. We have lost sight that our suffering is the source of our greatest potential for growth and maturity. Real deep seeded character development is born out of this type of experience.

The difficulties and problems that we face become the defining moments of our lives. By avoiding them, trying to rid ourselves of them, or trying to cure ourselves of our difficulties simply doesn't work. When difficulties arise, we should move towards them. Allow them to teach and mold us before we move through them, not around or past them.

# Key #5 ~ It's all about Relationship.

The quality of your relationships dictates your physical, mental, emotional health. The overarching theme in all the research literature points to this fact, but the implications have yet to be fully realized. Now when applying this to a counseling, it boils down to two important factors.

- 1) Therapy should focus on the nature of your personal relationships regardless of the issue.
- 2) If you don't have a good working relationship with your therapist, therapy won't be successful.

Every major difficulty in human experience is rooted in relationship, from marital and family issues, to anxiety, and even substance abuse. This is because of one resounding truth, "No man (or woman) is an island." When we deal with issues it is always in relation to those in our social nexus. Therapy must incorporate those you love in order to result in real and lasting change.



**"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."  
John Donne**

“If you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I think I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the thing I want to live for.” **Thomas Merton**



## About **Matt**

A contributing member of the website [www.mindfortherapy.com](http://www.mindfortherapy.com), Matt helped to found and initiate the site. *Mind for Therapy* is devoted to exploring the creative and innovative practices of psychotherapy that produce transformation in both the client and the therapist.

Matt is the director of the clinical services division at the Center for Children and Families. CFCF is a non-profit organization that operates with the commitment of being “dedicated to the promotion of safe, healthy environments for children and families through advocacy, counseling, education, and prevention”.

Matt is also a developer of the website [www.therapyroad.com](http://www.therapyroad.com), which provides a platform for therapists and clients to have healing interactions online.

***As a national and international presenter and trainer, Matt is available to provide consultation and training.***

