What Really Happens in a Beyond EAP Therapy Session?

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BeyondEAP

Specialist employee support
for life's toughest challenges

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This eBook will open the door to our therapy room.

Partly due to the necessary confidentiality that surrounds it, therapy can feel like a mysterious practice in which all kinds of strange things take place behind closed doors.

As such, there can be some misconceptions about what therapy sessions involve. I've personally had conversations with company directors who assume I'll treat their employee's brain like a malfunctioning computer: quickly logging in and deleting the past!

In reality, nobody has the power to delete somebody else's past – and nor should they. At Beyond EAP, our approach to employee therapy is about guiding them to build new associations and default reactions to stress or trauma, creating healthy neural pathways.

I liken the process to building a brand-new motorway alongside an old road, down which an employee's thinking has travelled for years. The road isn't demolished, but the motorway soon evolves into the default route for new thinking-processes.

This eBook will open the door to our therapy room, welcome you inside, and show you how the specialist therapy we provide at Beyond EAP helps employees who struggle with major issues like (for example) unresolved trauma, depression, or diagnosis of a serious illness.

What is the therapist's role?

As a qualified therapist, I see my role as that of an educator, facilitator, and guide. Part of my sessions involve passing on my personal insights and experience around what's happening in the brain using Applied Neuroscience. This helps the employee better understand why they are thinking, feeling, and reacting in certain ways.

Where applicable and appropriate, I will break down the lessons I have learned and trained in, to offer the most valuable knowledge, wisdom, and practical techniques that helped to change not only my own life, but the lives of many employees I have worked with over the years.

It's time for our first session.

We refer to our first session with a new employee as a Discovery session, in which we first reassure the employee of our commitment to their confidentiality.

When a person is in crisis, they need to know they can trust the therapist who is offering support. So it is crucial for us to offer a completely safe and non-judgmental space for the employee to share their thoughts and feelings, from the moment our first session begins.

The Discovery session is the first step towards fostering a strong rapport with the employee, so they feel completely comfortable expressing themselves honestly. The true, genuine connection we build between us then allows room for the employee to develop their own self-discovery and emotional resilience. In some cases, an employee may even feel fully understood for the first time in their life.

How do we make the employee feel understood?

This is all about ensuring they feel properly heard. We invite the employee to speak freely to us about what has happened to them, and what has led them to the point they are at in their life now.

As you might imagine, conversations like these can become extremely emotional, so we allow the employee appropriate time and space to truly open up, maybe cry, or even become angry as they express themselves in detail.

We seek to reassure the employee that therapy takes strength, commitment, trust, and energy – it's a tough journey, but it's also an incredibly brave and proactive step that they are taking.

We also explain that therapy is a collaborative process, and outline to the employee how their full engagement and commitment will help them build new levels of awareness and behaviour. With our guidance, they can cultivate their own 'toolbox' of skills and coping strategies that will create positive changes and a more purposeful and fulfilling life.

Often, we suggest they take some time to consider everything we've discussed, and decide if they are ready to continue. If they are (not everybody is) we recommend sharing their commitment to therapy with their line manager, HR, and perhaps also their loved ones.

From what we learn in the Discovery session, we will create a bespoke therapy plan for the employee, with around six further sessions that are each completely tailored to their individual needs.

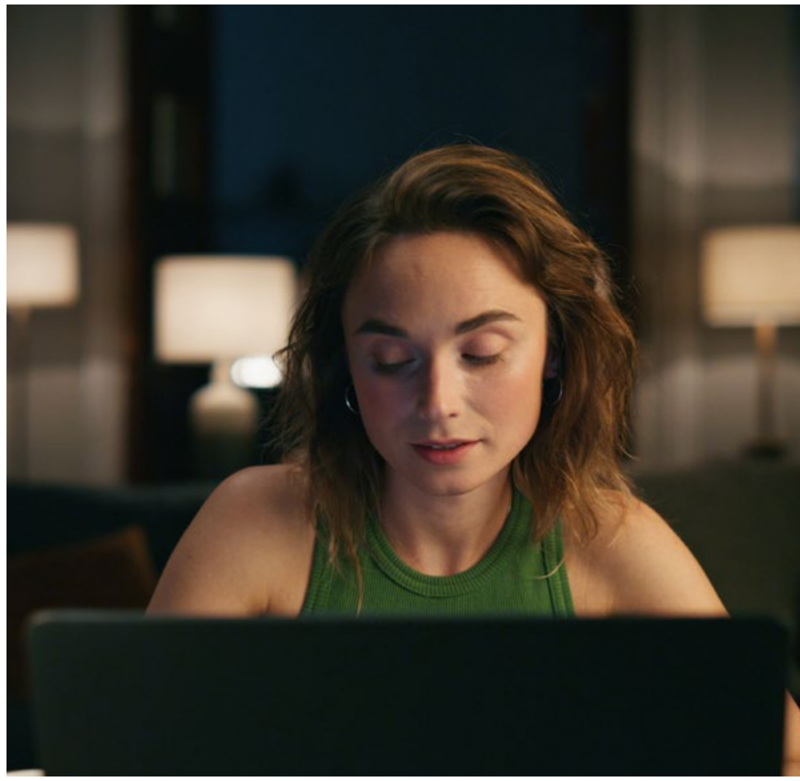
What happens in the next session?

We ask the employee how they have been feeling, and help them reflect on the Discovery session, including how they have emotionally processed its content. We then begin building the content around the themes we have identified together.

This involves exploring their thoughts, concepts, feelings, and experiences; working through challenges or difficulties they may be facing and from our point of view as therapists, gaining more understanding along the way.

We continue to build our focus from their background, personality, and values, and look together at how we can guide the employee to build their resilience with coping strategies, potential problem-solving skills, and possible ways to improve communication and wider relationships.

We also offer our own therapeutic insights and reflections, helping the employee to gain new perspectives and awareness about themselves and their behaviours.



The process of assigning homework and in-session tasks is to encourage follow-up activities and try new thinking processes to reinforce what was or will be discussed during the session-programme.

We will review and reflect on what went well for the employee in between each session, to offer positive reinforcement of their effort and progress with encouragement and support.

How about the remaining sessions?

From a background of neuroscience, we help the employee to build coping strategies and skills tailored to their circumstances. This helps them address specific challenges and become more aware of how their triggers and stressors manifest.

In one session we might ask the employee to go out into the world with several strategies in mind, then assess their effectiveness during the next session. As a result, their 'toolkit' expands with successful, personally-identified strategies for them to use in a range of situations.

We may discuss areas of health including sleep and nutrition, coping strategies such as alcohol, and energy management – the ability to notice and restore personal energy levels – along with other methods of self-care to create balance.

The themes we might cover together may include relationships, developing healthy strategies for anger management, or how the employee can release themselves from past resentments, pain, and suffering. Other sessions can then follow this path into purpose, meaning, and discovering the employee's core values. This could involve work around trauma: both active and residual.

This session programme will usually continue along these lines until we reach the penultimate session, when we start to plan towards the end of the programme by summarising key points and discussing future goals.

The final session and follow-up.

In the final session we discuss and reflect on the journey the employee has taken in full: their growth, what they have learned during the process, and reflecting on the successful areas of development and change.

We acknowledge how far the employee has come when discussing continuing self-care and potential further resources, and then we help them create meaningful long-term future goals, so they can continue focussing on what matters most to them.

I often describe therapy as a wake-up alarm; an upgrade in our operating system (I tend to use iPhone updates as a clear analogy!) Often, the employee will come to a realisation that they wouldn't be who they are today without the challenging or traumatic event they faced, so they leave with acceptance.

We also let the employee know that we will compile a report for HR, that does not break their confidentiality. Aspects of this report include whether or not they were on time for their sessions, if they participated in homework, and were engaged and committed throughout the programme. Our report also includes the employee's own feedback on our therapy sessions, together with any ongoing recommendations on our part.

At this point, we openly discuss with the employee whether they feel they need more resources, or if their line manager/ HR could put anything in place to assist them further in future. For example, we might recommend a phased return to work, or further training.

Next steps (it's not goodbye).

Once we have received the employee's feedback (here is a sample of the comments we have received) we create our report and send it to HR as confirmation of therapy coming to an end.

We often like to keep in touch with the employees we have supported, so we can hear how they are progressing through life and work. We very much enjoy hearing about the changes they make – having built that valuable sense of trust and rapport, we don't end the relationship just because our sessions are over.

It is very important to note that every therapy session is different and unique, and the discovery, recovery, healing time, and overall effectiveness of the programme depends on various factors. They include the employee's openness, engagement, and full commitment to the process.

At Beyond EAP we have the knowledge, qualifications, and experience to understand that a successful therapy journey involves productive sessions that lead to positive change and personal growth over time. This is exactly what we help provide, and we hope this eBook has shed some light on how.

To find out more about our approach or to discuss an employee you're feeling concerned about, please get in touch.

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