

Using the Therapy Journey Handout

Setting the shape of care from session one

This one-page client handout is meant to be shared early, ideally in session 1 or 2, with clients whose presentations are mild to moderate (for example, adjustment, or mild-to-moderate anxiety or depressive diagnoses) where a shorter, focused course of care is the clinically expected path.

Why give it out early

Introducing the beginning, middle, and end framework at intake does two things at once. It sets a client's expectations so an ending doesn't feel abrupt or punitive later, and it gives you, the provider, an easy reference point to return to when a client is approaching discharge-readiness. You're not introducing a new idea in month four. You're following through on something you already agreed to together.

When to bring it up

- In session 1 or 2, after you've heard what's bringing the client in and have a working sense of diagnosis and severity.
- Frame it as **how we'll approach this together**, not as a limit or a denial of care.
- Revisit it briefly at any natural checkpoint (a good-progress session, a re-assessment, or session 8 to 10) to name which stage the client is in.

Script you can use:

"I want to share a quick picture of how our work together tends to go. A lot of people I see for this find real relief in a focused chapter of work rather than an open-ended one, usually somewhere in the range of a few months. Let's use this as a loose guide, and we'll adjust it together as we go."

Who this is (and isn't) for

Best fit: mild-to-moderate anxiety, depression, adjustment, or similar presentations where skills-based, time-limited work is the clinically appropriate model. Use clinical judgment to hold off or reframe for clients with more complex, chronic, or higher-severity presentations, active safety concerns, or significant comorbidities. For these clients, don't force the three-stage framing. Longer or open-ended care may be appropriate, and that's fine.

Connecting it to discharge

When a client reaches **Moving Forward**, you already have shared language for the conversation. Point back to the handout, name the progress against the goals set in Stage 1, and frame ending as a graduation rather than a cutoff, with the door open to return if needed.