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## Fear of therapy

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I just read a short article [Fear of Apples](#) by Seth Godin. He suggests that there are two reasons that people might not be taking advantage of a product or service.

... Whatever you sell, there are two big reasons people aren't buying it:

1. They don't know about it.
2. They're afraid of it.

If you can get over those two, then you get the chance to prove that they need it and it's a good value. But as long as people are afraid of what you sell, you're stuck.

People are afraid of tax accountants, iPods, chiropractors, non-profits, insurance brokers and fancy hotels. They're afraid of anything with too many choices, too many opportunities to look foolish or to waste time or money.

This got me thinking about the various ways that people may be afraid of approaching a therapist to solve a problem and to improve their lives

### Fear of the process

If you have never been to a therapist before, the chances are you will assume it's going to be like something you've seen at the movies or on TV.

Perhaps lying on a couch with a bearded guy with a Viennese accent sitting in an old leather armchair asking you to tell him about your potty training.

Maybe it's going to be like One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest with Nurse Ratchett at full power, or worse.

Perhaps it will be a lot of talking, re-hashing old hurts and working your way through a couple of boxes of paper tissues during each session.

There are so many different kinds of therapies each with their own style and form that it would be impossible for anyone to know, without previous experience, what to expect.

### Fear of judgment

If you have a problem and you are contemplating therapy, then it's quite common to think: "It's just me that has the problem. All the 'normal' people will think I'm mad". That somehow you are different from all the 'normal' people who don't have this problem.

It can be easy to imagine that you might be the only one who thinks or feels this way. No one else has ever had that kind of thought or feeling or done those things. It might even be possible that you think you are mad. In fact most of my clients at one point or another will say: "You will think I'm mad but ...", and I've never had any reason to agree with any of them about this, and they wouldn't have been the first people to think they were the first person to think this way.

### Fear of being taken advantage of.

Private therapy is not the cheap option for most people. You might well be afraid that a short term expense is going to turn into a long drawn out pro-

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cess that costs a lot of money. Especially if your idea of therapy is that it will involve months or even years of talking and very slow progress.

What is there to stop the therapist leading you on for their own benefit?

What if it's worse than being financially abused?

You don't have to wait too long to find an article in the media about how a doctor, nurse, health care professional or therapist has taken advantage of a client's trust and misused them. How do you know you can trust the therapist to be ethical?

If the issue you want help with is getting over some abuse in childhood or later and you are thinking of coming to see someone of the same gender as the abuser it's not hard to imagine how difficult that might be.

### Fear of exposure

For most clients therapy is an expedition into unknown and frightening territory and they don't know whether they can trust their guide's integrity or competence. How can you tell if someone is a worthy guide before you have even met them.

What if on this journey you have to bring your darkness into the light and the therapist sees it? If all your fears and closely held secrets are brought into the light what will the therapist think?

### Fear of failure

Many people feel stupid or inadequate having to bring a problem to a therapist. To have a problem for any length of time you've probably been struggling with your attempts to sort it out. At least those attempts have been in private. What if this therapy thing doesn't work? Will going to a therapist be just another opportunity to fail?

Maybe it is worse than that if you have been to many therapists and had no relief then each subsequent attempt to change may amplify the fear that you won't be able to change. You might even begin to think "nothing I do works". In this case seeing someone else might be an opportunity for a further loss of hope.

### Fear of success

On the face of it this fear is surprising, surely you are going to a therapist to get better. What if it does work? What if I do change?

How will I cope with being a different person and how will those around me cope? If my family and friends are used to me being one way and might even prefer it that way, how will they cope?

It might even feel that it's safer to stay with an unhappy situation than risk the uncertainty of a new and better life.

It takes courage to bring your fear and share it with a stranger.

- Karen Ellis, Psychological Therapist.

With all those potential fears ranged against them it's a miracle that anyone picks up the courage to seek help from a mental health professional in either the private or public sector. It can take a lot of courage to approach someone for help with painful difficulties.

However, it's important to remember that if you have had enough courage to go through everything you have been through up to now, and you probably have enough to spare to go through the process of getting better.

I have not ceased being fearful, but I have ceased to let fear control me.

I have accepted fear as a part of life - specifically the fear of change, the fear of the

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unknown;  
and I have gone ahead despite the pounding  
in my heart that says:  
turn back, turn back, you'll die if you venture  
too far.  
- Erica Jong, author.