

Do You Speak Therapist?

Common (If Not Slightly Cliché) Counseling Questions and Phrases

Cassie Jewell, M.Ed., LPC, LSATP



If you're a clinician, you've probably uttered most of the following phrases/questions (or similar) in sessions. (And if you're in therapy, you've likely heard your counselor use comparable expressions.)

1. How are you feeling?
2. How does/did that make you feel?
3. What would happen if you gave yourself permission to feel your emotions?
4. What was that experience like for you?
5. When did you first notice that...
6. When did you first recognize that...
7. What are your current internal experiences and reactions?
8. I'm noticing that...
9. What I'm hearing is...
10. It sounds like...
11. I wonder if...
12. It makes a lot of sense hearing it from your perspective... *and*, I wonder what would happen if...
13. May I share some feedback with you?
14. Are you open to a suggestion?
15. Would you like to hear a different perspective?
16. May I share my observations?
17. Would you like to know more about [mental health topic]?
18. Some research indicates that _____, but other studies have found that _____.
19. Tell more about that.
20. Tell me what that was like for you.
21. Will you say more about that?
22. Can you speak to...

23. I'm not sure I understand.
24. Help me to understand.
25. Correct me if I'm wrong, but...
26. What am I missing? Something doesn't quite match up...
27. Is there anything else I need to know?
28. Did I hear you correctly when you said...
29. May I pause you for a minute?
30. Can we return to what you said earlier about...
31. It looks like you shut down when I said _____. Can we talk about it?
32. You seem distracted today. Do you want to talk about something else?
33. Do you want to take a break from this topic?
34. What do you think _____ would say if they were here in this room with us?
35. If it was _____ in this situation, what advice would you give them?
36. What does _____ look like to you?
37. What does _____ mean to you?
38. What message did you hear when they said...
39. How would your life be different if you didn't have...
40. Was there anything you could have done differently?
41. It sounds like you were doing the best you could with what you had at the time.
42. Honestly, I'm not sure how I would have reacted if in your shoes.
43. You're the expert on you.
44. I wish I had the answer to that.
45. That's a really good question. What do you think?
46. On the one hand _____, but on the other...
47. You say _____, but your actions...
48. I'm concerned that...
49. I can only imagine how _____ that was for you.
50. Can we explore this more?