

# Session 1—Engaging Participants into Therapy



## Most Important Tasks for this Session:

- In advance of this session, and later sessions, prepare supporting materials, such as Program Worksheets, and write the agenda on a white board or shared computer document.
- Orient participants to the format of therapy and introduce the concept of personal goals.

## Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Establish a Community Agreement
3. Introduce the concept of setting goals
4. Complete In-Session 1 Worksheet—**Areas to Improve**
5. Assign At-Home Practice: bringing back the folder and Worksheet

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

Get to know participants. Build initial rapport. Ask them:

- About their history—including previous experience in therapy—what was helpful and what they found challenging
- How they found out about the Program
- What they are hoping to get out of the Program
- If they have any questions

## 2. Establish a Community Agreement

Community Agreements play an important role in maintaining a safe and effective environment in sessions. They are established by the participants and the facilitator to create a structure that promotes a positive and supportive atmosphere.

**Facilitator-led activity:** Ask participants to brainstorm agreements. Write participants' suggestions on the board or type them into a shared screen. Examples may include arriving on time, turning cell phones off, and using respectful communication such as speaking one at a time so that every voice is heard.

## 3. Introduce the Concept of Setting Goals

**Suggested dialogue for facilitators:** *“We all have areas in our life that could be improved, changes we could make that would make us a bit happier or make daily life easier. For instance, getting or keeping a job, making a friend, going to 12-step meetings regularly, or opening a bank account.”*

**Facilitator-led activity:** Ask participants to brainstorm areas they would like to improve, or how life would be different if they had their ideal life. *“Where would you want to be three months from now?”*

## 4. Complete the In-Session 1 Worksheet—Areas to Improve

**Facilitator-led activity:** Give participants the In-Session 1 Worksheet—**Areas to Improve**. Ask participants to:

1. Read the list.
2. Number the three that are most important in order of importance, 1, 2, 3.

If in a group, share the goals and write them on the board or shared screen.

## In-Session 1 Worksheet—Areas to Improve

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Imagine what your ideal life would look like. What areas would you like to improve? Read the list below and number the three that are the most important to you in order of importance, 1, 2, 3.

<b>Work</b>	Apply for employment or do better at my job	
	Find a volunteer job	
<b>Education</b>	Have more structure in my days/attend groups or classes	
	Take lessons in something that interests me	
	Get a Diploma/Go back to school	
<b>Health</b>	Join a 12-step group	
	Go to a park to walk, relax, exercise/become more fit	
<b>Hobby</b>	Take lessons in something that interests me (computer, cooking, drawing)	
	Start a hobby in the community	
<b>Independence</b>	Get a car/bike/more independent transportation	
	Learn to budget money/open a bank account	
<b>Connections</b>	Meet a significant other/go on a date	
	Make a friend/talk and socialize more	
	Visit a family member/reconnect with family/friend	
	Help take care of a family member	
<b>Other</b>		

## 5. At-Home Practice



**Note:** If virtual, the participant should already have been given the folder and some of the Worksheets. If in-person, please give participants a folder in preparation of the Program starting along with the In-Session 1 Worksheet—**Areas to Improve**.

### STAYING ORGANIZED

Folders help participants keep their worksheets together and makes them easier to locate at home and during sessions.

#### Suggested dialogue for facilitators:

- *“The assignments and Worksheets we do together in this program are important. We continue to look back at these Worksheets throughout our sessions.”*

Talk about where the participant will store their folder and, if printed Worksheets will be used, how they will remember to bring their folder to each in-person or virtual session.

- *“Coming to each session is important.”*

Ask participants to generate reasons why this is true. Ask how they will remember sessions and what they will do if a barrier arises (examples: no Internet, no charged iPad, or no gas in their car).

- Ask participants, *“What is the point of At-Home Practice?”*

*“What about going to a session one hour per week and not doing homework? (There are 168 hours in one week. If you are only in-session for one hour, that’s 167 hours not thinking about your goal or making progress.) This is why we will be collaborating on weekly at-home assignments.”*



**Action item:** *“Your homework is to bring back the folder and bring back the completed **Areas to Improve** Worksheet that we worked on in today’s session.”*

**Suggested closing dialogue for facilitators:** *“The good news is that in sessions like this where we work together on goals, the research suggests it is very possible for you to achieve what you set out to do and improve your daily life.*

*We are going to meet once a week for the next three months and we are going to be entirely focused on making positive changes in your life. We will identify ways to make these changes that are realistic and will have lasting change.*

*You won’t be asked to do anything you don’t want to do—these are your goals, not your doctor’s or your family’s. Whatever you think would improve your life is what we will work on together.”*