

# When The Manual Doesn't Work

## Practical Strategies for Person-Centred ED Treatment

This guide offers practical strategies for implementing person-centred approaches in eating disorder treatment, emphasising collaboration, flexibility, and meeting clients where they are in their journey.

### Session Strategies

#### Opening Sessions

- "What feels most important to talk about today?"
- "What kind of support would be most helpful right now?"
- "This is the session plan I have for us today. I thought we could discuss these issues. What do you think? How would you like to use our time together?"
- Use scaling questions: "On a scale of 0-10, how ready do you feel to explore this?"
- Offer session structure choices: check-in, challenge discussion, skill-building
- Co-create agenda at the start of each session

#### During Sessions

- Mirror client's language when discussing ED experiences
- Use reflection loops: "Let me check if I'm understanding..."
- Validate before problem-solving. Sometimes it is better to leave out problem-solving altogether
- Check in "What do you need right now? Are you needing problem solving or just validation?"
- Make space for silence
- Note and reflect back non-verbal cues
- Use "would you be interested in..." instead of "you need to..."
- Share session notes and invite additions/corrections

#### Closing Sessions

- Collaborative summary of key points and joint decision on next steps
- "What's one thing from today's session you want to remember?"
- Check what was helpful/unhelpful
- Discuss how momentum can be maintained between sessions

### Assessment Tools

#### Initial Assessment

- Timeline mapping connecting life events, trauma, and ED development
- Family genograms
- Assess areas of marginalisation
- Values exploration worksheet
- Quality of life assessment
- Sensory profile questionnaire
- Housing/financial/relationship stability check

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## Progress Tracking

- Client-defined success markers (rather than therapist defined)
- Monthly progress reviews (note: assessing the relationship and therapy, not the client)
- Non-weight focused monitoring tools

## Practical Support Techniques

### Crisis Planning

- Develop personalised coping cards
- Create a basic safe meal plan for during periods of lower functioning
- List specific support people and their roles
- Include client's own words and strategies
- Include practical grounding techniques
- Add specific comfort activities

### Daily Living Support

- Weekly schedule templates balancing recovery with life demands
- Budget-friendly meal planning strategies
- Work/school accommodation letter templates
- Resource lists for housing and financial support
- Transportation planning
- Childcare solutions
- Social support mapping

### Sensory Support

- Food texture mapping
- Environment modification checklist
- Personal comfort toolkit planning
- Temperature sensitivity strategies
- Sound/light modification techniques
- Comfortable clothing guidelines
- Movement preference exploration



## Adaptation Strategies

### Meal Support

- Cultural food inclusion strategies
- Accommodating texture and temperature preferences
- Timing flexibility options
- Environment modification plans
- Support preferred eating style whether eating alone or body doubling

## Communication Tools

### Validating Statements

- "That makes sense given what you're experiencing"
- "It's understandable to feel conflicted"
- "Thank you for sharing that with me"

### Collaborative Language

- "What are your thoughts about..."
- "How would you feel about exploring..."
- "What has been helpful in the past?"
- "What feels manageable right now?"
- "What support do you need with this?"
- "How can I help make this feel safer?"
- "What would make this more doable?"

## Working Through Obstacles

When stuck points arise, use these collaborate approaches:

- Brainstorming: Generate solutions together without judgment
- Turning the Tables: "What would you do if you were in charge or if you were the therapist? How would you make the person feel seen and supported? What do they need?"
- Empathic Confrontation: Acknowledge the protection while gently challenging
- In the context of strong rapport - use the Dialectical Behavioural Skill devil's advocate eg. "Are you sure you want to? It's going to be very hard work"
- Pros/Cons Analysis: Examine both sides of maintaining vs changing
- Future Self: Explore how current choices impact long-term goals. For those with temporal myopia (time blindness), brain storm ways to connect to the future self eg. scrapbooking or journaling around the future self, etc.
- Experiment Design: Create small tests of change together

The key is maintaining connection while exploring obstacles - validate the difficulty while supporting movement forward.

