

Therapy in Quarantine

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“How are you?” your therapist might ask. Or not.

“How has your week been?” your therapist might ask. Or not.

“How have you been feeling?” your therapist might ask. Or not.

While therapy is an individualized experience, many agree that therapy has helped them in unimaginable ways.

“Therapy has helped me better understand myself. It’s helped me learn about what I want and what I need. It’s also helped me understand my behaviors and habits, like why I feel the way I do, why I do things, and why I do things I don’t want to do,” Marguerite Fields, a junior, said.

Like Fields, many find that therapists’ third-person perspective can help them sort through their problems. Therapists often reframe the issues clients talk about, which allows clients to view their own actions through a different lens.

“Sometimes you can be so zoomed in on one problem that you develop a sort of tunnel vision, and you continue focusing on the negative. Therapists can help you find a bit more balance,” Mindy Chiang, the Carlmont Chinese teacher, said.

Although therapists may use similar techniques, such as reframing a problem or displaying empathy, not all therapists are the same. Some may guide clients to a solution and give advice, while others may just be an outlet to discuss problems with. In some cases, clients might even prefer getting into the details of what chemicals in their brain make them feel the way they do.

Emily van Sebille, a Carlmont English teacher, equates the various techniques used in therapy to differing styles of teaching.

“You teach the way that you learn best, and I think therapists do the same thing. They try to help in the way they want to be helped,” van Sebille said.

Therapists often apply the techniques that they’ve experienced and have worked best for them since they’ve also been to therapy as part of their training. Because of this, it’s important to remember that not all therapists are the same, and a negative first experience shouldn’t be a deterring factor.

“Think about it like a dating app. Your first session is like your first date—your first swipe. You might not

like them right away,” van Sebille said.

However, finding the right therapist is important. If you and your therapist don’t click, that’s okay! You won’t hurt their feelings; they truly want the best for you, and sometimes the best may not be with them.

“Therapists are there to help you. You pay them to listen to you and help you with your problems. In my experience, they really care about people, which is why they do what they do,” Fields said.

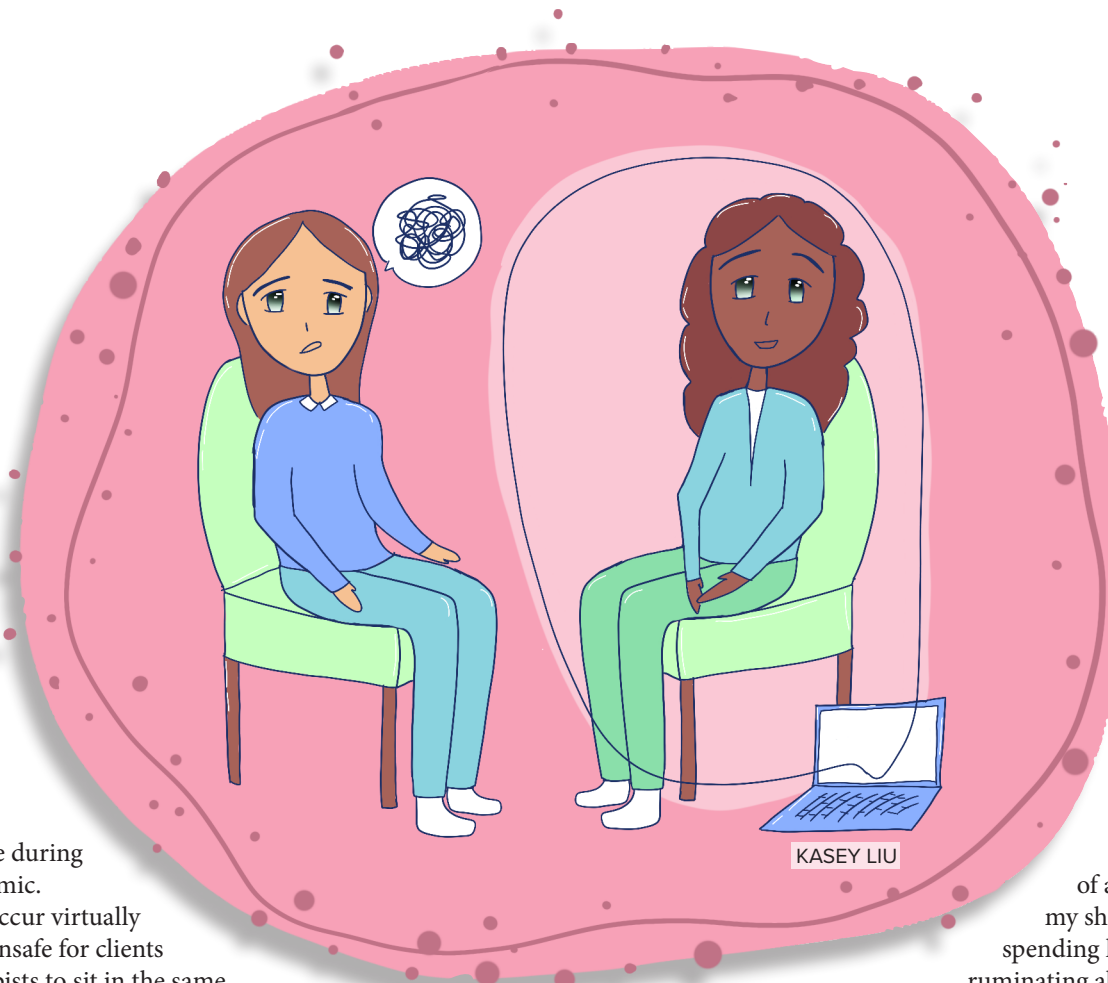
Susan Ko, who has a doctorate in clinical psychology, encourages those who may be unsure about whether or not therapy is right for them.

“I may be biased, but I definitely recommend it. We live in a busy world, and therapy is about taking time for yourself, increasing your awareness of why things are going on, and creating time and space to learn about what you need. It’s the ultimate way to care for yourself,” Ko said.

Although therapy is significantly beneficial for mental health, it has been an entirely different



MARGUERITE FIELDS



experience during the pandemic. Sessions occur virtually since it's unsafe for clients and therapists to sit in the same

room. This change in style has impacted the effectiveness of therapy, as many fear that the people they live with might hear the things they discuss.

"If I'm talking about how it's difficult to be with my family sometimes, I'm afraid that someone might hear and get hurt. I have a younger sister, and I don't want to upset her with things that she doesn't have to worry about," Avantika Swaminathan, a sophomore, said.

Some may also feel that the lack of human connection damages the therapy experience overall.

Furthermore, while therapy is a beneficial experience to most, there still exists a negative stigma around it. This stigma can be based on a variety of factors, such as race.

"A lot of people of color think it's a 'white person' thing, which is not true. A lot of people also view therapy as a weakness because it's like admitting something's wrong with you," Sofie Hai, a junior, said.

Contrary to popular belief, going to therapy doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you. Everyone goes through their own problems, and many find benefits in discussing them with a licensed professional. Hai equates this experience with broken glass.

"You're not going to ignore broken glass on the ground; you're going to pick it up, not pretend that nothing's wrong. It's just like going to therapy to pick yourself up," Hai said.

Therapy is an impactful way to sort through problems and better understand feelings, and it can further lead to improvements in health, both mentally and physically.

"With less of a weight on my shoulders and spending less time ruminating about various

things in my life, I was able to sleep a lot better,"

Swaminathan said.

Getting enough sleep is a physical change that has a great impact on mental health. According to Harvard Medical School, treating a sleep disorder may help alleviate symptoms of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder.

Additionally, many believe that therapy is only an outlet for those with significantly damaging mental illnesses, such as depression. However, it's important to recognize that everyone's struggles are equally valid.

"Everyone's their own person; they have their own struggles and their own problems, so conversations with therapists are unique for everyone," Brian Yan, a junior, said.

But, no matter what issues you face, it can be daunting to delve into them with another person since these issues often stem from our deepest insecurities. However, Milo Lee, a junior, notes that therapy is truly an individualized experience.

"You really don't have to share every single thing with your therapist. You can talk about anything you like until you get the feel of what therapy is like, and then you can dive deeper into other things," Lee said.

Ultimately, it's crucial to remember that therapists want what's best. They're there to help people, not judge them.

"Their one job is to not judge you and listen to and absorb what you're saying," Swaminathan said. "It's the one place where you can speak freely, and you don't have to keep that burden all on your own."