

# How to ...

## Prep for a Counseling Session



### Before an initial session...

- An initial session typically includes goal-setting and discussing a variety of topics including current symptoms, routine, relationships, and overall well-being. It's helpful for you to know what you're hoping to gain from these sessions. Before your appointment, think about any skills you want to build, areas of your life you'd like to focus on or improve, and challenges that you may want to process.

### Before a follow-up session...

- Give yourself a buffer time of 10-15 minutes before your session begins if possible.
- Calm your central nervous system with a practice like diaphragmatic breathing: *Breathe in like you're smelling a flower for four seconds, hold for five seconds, and breathe out like you're blowing out a birthday candle. Repeat several times.*
- Think back to previously discussed goals or strategies to prep for your session. What would be helpful to discuss today?

### In between sessions...

- Keep a list as topics or situations you'd like to discuss come up. I encourage my clients to keep a running list on their phone. This helps keep track of topics as well as gives mental relief so we can acknowledge something upsetting us and then release it onto the list.
- Email or text your counselor a list of discussion topics before your next appointment.

