

Hope Mapping

What is it?

- Structured, visual, clinical approach to help clients see a path forward in therapy by identifying goals, potential obstacles, and ways to stay motivated.
- Concrete framework for instilling hope by breaking down progress into manageable steps.

Step 1:

Establish a Hopeful Vision (A Destination)

- Ask: "What does healing or recovery look like for you?"
- Have the client define what life could be like if free from their Eating Disorder.
- Encourage values-based goals (e.g., "I want to feel free around food")

Step 2

Identify the Pathways (The Roadmap)

- Break big goals into smaller, tangible steps (e.g., "First, I will challenge one fear food," then "I will work on reducing body checking").
- Get creative and use visual tools like drawing a path with milestones along the way that can be added to over time. Remind clients that the roadmap will not be linear, but rather it serves a list of action steps within their control that can add up to real change in the direction they want to see.
- Ask: "What small step can you take this week toward your goal?"
- This helps client's develop a sense of agency and self trust, leading to increased hope and motivation for recovery.

Hope Mapping

Step 3:

Anticipate Barriers (Roadblocks & Detours)

- Ask: “What might get in the way of your progress?”
- List internal (self-doubt, fear, avoidance) and external (societal pressures, lack of support) barriers.
- Help client develop alternate routes ahead of time (e.g., “If I have a setback, I will reach out for support instead of shutting down”). Having a plan in place helps prevent hopelessness/shame when recovery does not go “perfectly.”
- Be as detailed as possible so that clients have a clear plan of what they can do when a trigger or roadblock arises, rather than using ED behaviors as a default.
- Therapist Role: Normalize lapses and reframe them as part of the journey, not the end of it. Take the morality out of relapse/lapses.

Step 4:

Identify Strengths & Supports (Fuel for the Journey)

- Reflect on past resilience—times they overcame difficulties.
- Ask: “Who or what can support you?” (friends, coping skills, therapy techniques, etc.).
- Encourage self-compassion practices to maintain motivation.
- Have client create a list of “whys” for recovery.

Step 5:

Maintain Hope & Adapt the Map

- Revisit and update the hope map regularly in and out of therapy.
- If a barrier arises, collaborate with client to adjust the route rather than abandon the journey.
- Reinforce even small wins to show that progress is happening, this builds hope.
- Therapist Role: Help clients see that hope is dynamic, not fixed, and that their progress is real—even when slow.