

Why is Psychotherapy and Psychology Expensive? *(adapted from an online article by Rachel Foorde)*

The point of this article isn't to present psychotherapist and psychologists as under-privileged, or hard-done by! Their incomes are usually above the Australian average. However, hopefully this article will provide some more insight into the reasons that contribute to high therapy costs.

Anecdotally, we know that the cost of private psychotherapy and psychology support is one of the barriers to people reaching out and seeking individual therapy. The Australian Psychological Society (or the APS), which is the peak body representing psychologists in Australia, has set their recommended fee at \$300 for a 45-60 minute consultation. We know this is a LOT of money for most people. When you multiply this rate by a few sessions per day, times a few days per week, over most weeks of the year, you'll likely come out with an astronomically large estimated sum of what your Therapist might earn per year.

However, there are a few myths and misconceptions about this figure. You might be surprised by the breakdown, and it might provide extra information about why individual session rates are so high.

Most psychotherapists work in a private practice and operate as 'sole traders'. At least 30% of their split would go to paying Tax, and your therapist is most likely also contributing to their own superannuation (another 12%). There are costs of renting or owning office space, relevant bills (such as electricity, water, internet, etc.), maintaining the materials and resources for therapy (such as furniture, computers, whiteboards, etc), paying for the right to use a variety of standardised mental health resources, other salaries for administration support, and relevant taxes. Your therapist would also then have a range of expenses – including their own insurances, their own clinical supervision (usually monthly) professional development training, their own registration and professional membership fees. These are all required to remain legally practising, and are often in the thousands of dollars per year.

Most significantly, your therapist also only gets paid if they have a session. This session rate must cover their time for outside of session work, such as keeping notes, contacting other relevant health professionals, planning, writing and sending resources, and writing reports. They don't get paid leave, so their session fees must also cover their expenses when not working, and taking holidays, study leave, or sick/carers leave. This is also why therapists have a cancellation fee for late cancellations or non attendance.

I hope this article helps you understand a little more about your therapists fee structure. Remember, there are other options for accessing low cost or free mental health support in our community and please speak to your health professional to get advice on the best fit for you.