

## Soothing therapy tensions <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

My partner gets nervous every time I see my psychotherapist because she doesn't like the idea of me talking about our relationship. For her, it's anxiety-producing because she fears there are things I tell my therapist that I don't tell her. For me, it's anxiety-producing because I feel like my therapy sessions should be a safe and confidential space for me and because I feel like having that space has made our relationship better overall. How can I assuage her fears and anxieties without feeling like I have to, a) tell her everything I say in therapy, or b) lie and say that she doesn't come up?

### **Answer**

Dear Reader,

A key characteristic of healthy relationships is to have boundaries and time to oneself in addition to time with the other person. While your partner may not understand your need for privacy regarding your therapy sessions or feels threatened by it, it's legitimate and healthy for you to protect this personal time. That being said, you might find it helpful to listen and try to understand her concerns and alleviate them. Being open and honest about your experience with therapy, without disclosing the content of your sessions, could be a good start to helping her feel more comfortable. At the end of the day, it's your decision what to disclose, if anything, to your partner.

Before you talk with your partner, it could be useful to take some time to reflect on your therapy sessions. How has being in therapy helped you? How has it helped your relationship? What topics do you want to keep between you and your therapist and why? What might you be comfortable sharing with your partner at this time, and what might change in the future? Is this information you feel comfortable sharing with your partner? Thinking through these questions prior to a conversation with her may help you get your thoughts in order.

During your conversation with her, it's best to be open and honest. You may want to acknowledge that while she and your relationship may come up sometimes, the sessions are an opportunity for you to explore and reflect on your individual feelings, concerns, and hopes so that you can be the healthiest version of yourself. If being in therapy has helped your relationship, it may be a good time to tell your partner that and maybe give a little insight about how it helps to

strengthen your relationship.

As you have these discussions, it's also helpful to understand your partner's perspective. It's possible she's feeling insecure about herself and your relationship. Sometimes people worry when they're talked about when they're not there. Listening to and validating her feelings, supporting your partner, being emotionally available to her, and building trust in your relationship might help curb some of the anxiety she feels when you see your therapist.

Ultimately, although it may be uncomfortable, if you haven't already, it can be helpful that you and your partner establish boundaries within your relationship. If you have set some boundaries, it may be helpful to set some more in this particular area that both work for you. Boundary setting — even in the most intimate of relationships — can allow you to become more self-confident, and communicate openly and honestly. With regard to your therapy, it may mean you share some of what you talk about or nothing at all. By establishing these together, both of you will have an understanding of what these boundaries look like and mean. It's good to keep in mind that boundaries may change or shift over time and can be renegotiated. It may be helpful to set check-ins with your partner to determine whether or not the boundaries you've both established are working, or whether they need to be adjusted.

If after you both talk you aren't able to assuage your partner's worries by yourself, you may consider bringing your concerns up in therapy. Your therapist may be able to help you figure out other ways to communicate your needs to your partner. Another option could be to invite her to one of your sessions or encouraging her to see a mental health professional, too. She might find that she's able to talk through her fears and anxieties and possibly gain insight into what therapy is like in general. You could also consider looking into couples counseling, if that would interest both of you.

It's great that you're seeking ways to support yourself and also be supportive of your partner. Hopefully this information helps you both find the right balance.

Alice!

Category:

[Emotional Health](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

[Counseling](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

[Relationship Stuff](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

[Relating & Communicating](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

## Related questions

[Concerned about confidential counseling](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

[How long should I be in therapy?](#) <sup>[7]</sup>

[Types of therapists](#) <sup>[8]</sup>

## Resources

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\) \(Morningside\)](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

[Mental Health Services \(CUIMC\)](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

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## Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
  - Content Use
  - Media Inquiries
  - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
  - Licensing Q&As
  - Get Alice! on Your Website
  - Full Site Syndication
  - Link to Go Ask Alice!

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### Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/soothing-therapy-tensions-1>
- [2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/emotional-health>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/counseling>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/relationship-stuff>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/relating-communicating>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/concerned-about-confidential-counseling-0>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/how-long-should-i-be-therapy-0>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/types-therapists-1>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>