

Table 2.4
Common Challenges in Establishing a Therapeutic Alliance

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Possible Considerations</u>
Client having low motivation or hope for change	Increase validation, affirmative statements, and reflection of feelings; do not debate, lecture, give unsolicited advice or solutions; normalize experiences; ask for permission to talk about particular topics and/or provide information; share possible alternative outcomes if change is made; use casual open-ended questions; summarize—link key themes
Difficulty establishing a therapeutic relationship with client	Show sincere interest in particular task/interests; reassess client's perception of your expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness; do you convey unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy? consider possible biases or stereotypes; are environmental stressors being taken into account?
Difficulty feeling empathy for client	Recall vigilant empathy – try to remind yourself of where the client is coming from to increase understanding of particular thoughts or behaviors
Client struggling with autonomy as therapy progresses	Review effectiveness of collaboration – e.g., are you leading too much, and is the rationale for collaboration made clear? use simple behavioral experiments to “test” new thoughts and behaviors; reinforce/praise autonomous actions
Negative/interfering expectations based on client's past therapy experiences	Process past experiences and consider what worked and what can be different; set expectations for therapy early, including the CBT model; model expectations and demonstrate benefits; do not bash past therapy experiences – look at CBT as alternative to what was done in the past (“give it a shot”)
Client having difficulty providing feedback	Set expectation for feedback early in therapy; provide gentle feedback to client; elicit feedback from client; praise client when feedback is provided; provide examples of how past feedback has resulted in good therapeutic outcomes