

Intensive Format Best Practices

Structuring Extended Sessions

Overview

Multi-day intensive work requires different pacing, structure, and energy management than weekly sessions. This guide covers practical considerations for effective intensive delivery.

Session Structure

Day One Focus: Assessment, history, pattern identification

Day Two Focus: Deep work on core issues, skill building

Day Three Focus: Integration, planning, relapse prevention

Pacing Guidelines

- 90-minute blocks maximum before breaks
- 15-minute breaks between blocks
- Longer break (45-60 min) for lunch
- End each day with grounding, not crisis
- Build in processing time, not just content

Energy Management

- Heaviest emotional work mid-morning when energy is highest
- Skill-building and practice in afternoon
- Save integration and planning for final sessions
- Monitor for flooding; take breaks when needed

Maintaining Momentum

- Start each day with brief check-in on overnight processing
- Connect current work to previous day's breakthroughs
- Use whiteboard/visual tracking to show progress
- Celebrate wins explicitly; couples in crisis need hope

Ending Well

- Final session should be forward-focused, not excavating new issues
- Written summary of insights and commitments
- Clear follow-up plan with specific next steps

- Resources for continued work

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