



# Finding a Right Fit Therapist

Having a good rapport with your therapist is essential to the healing relationship. While all therapists are trained in techniques to build this rapport, meet their clients where they're at, and promote comfort, sometimes we don't click. That's okay. Just because a therapist wasn't right for you right now doesn't mean that another might not be a better fit. Here's the catch, few of us have the resources (time and money) to invest in shopping around for a therapist. Therefore, it's helpful to be intentional when you set out to start therapy. Here's a brief list to get you started.

## IDENTIFY POSSIBLE OPTIONS

For many people this means looking into their health plan networks to check that a therapist is covered by their insurance provider. What's covered and how much is going to vary—a great deal—by insurance provider. Many therapists are in-network with several providers, but that doesn't always mean that therapy will be covered by a plan. This can feel a bit overwhelming and lots of insurers have member support lines you can call to ask a customer service rep to help you narrow your search. Often you can do this search on a website through your insurer, as well. You can ask about location, accessibility, specialty, and even gender. I suggest identifying 3-5 therapists who meet some of your key criteria.

Psychology Today also provides a directory and verification of license on their website ([psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com)). However, to be listed in the directory therapists have to pay. Therefore, it will not be a comprehensive list, but it's pretty widely used and respected. Many therapists have google or yelp business listings too. Meaning, you don't have to rely on an insurance provider alone to help you generate a good list.

If you do not have health insurance, or no coverage for mental health, be aware that many therapists do accept cash or offer sliding scale fee options.

If you cannot afford to see a therapist, it may still be valuable to reach out to one that you have identified as a potential good fit. Many therapists may be able to direct you to other groups or resources that could still be beneficial.

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

While all therapy includes compassion and empathy, the theoretical approach of the therapist will also influence the course of therapy. Here are a few of the common approaches you might want to familiarize yourself with, keeping in mind, a therapist may utilize several of these techniques in conjunction with one another, depending on the client's needs.

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):**  
Works to identify and change patterns of thinking or behavior that may be unhealthy or negative.
- **Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT):**  
Focuses on behavioral skills aimed at stress and emotional management to improve relationships.
- **Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT):** Emphasizes increasing awareness and acceptance of thoughts and feelings and committing to making changes to increase your ability to cope with and adjust to situations.
- **Psychodynamic:** Explores unconscious thoughts and behaviors. Emphasizes the development of insight around internal motivations and drives.
- **Interpersonal:** Addresses interpersonal skills and problems within relationships.
- **Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT):** Brings together CBT and mindfulness techniques aimed at helping participants better understand and manage their emotions and thoughts.
- **Eye movement desensitization and re-processing (EMDR):** Uses bilateral sensory input, such as side-to-side eye movements or hand tapping to work through challenging or distressing experiences. This approach has been demonstrated to be effective at processing and treating trauma.



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## CHECK SPECIALIZATIONS, TRAININGS, CERTIFICATIONS, AND LICENSURE

For the most part, therapists are educated and trained to meet a wide variety of mental health needs. However, after schooling many will seek additional training and specialization—in techniques (like EMDR or play therapy) or populations (perinatal or children). You'll want to find out if the therapist you're thinking about seeing has any specific expertise on the issue you're looking to find support for. Often, therapists will list such things on their websites or public directory profiles. If not, you'll want to make sure to ask. Additionally, it may be valuable to find out what type of license they have—temporary or new issue versus full (this may vary by state)—or if they hold certifications related to the specialization.

If you're looking for a specialist in perinatal mental health (as is the subject matter of this book): Postpartum Support International is a good source. They provide an online directory at: [www.psidirectory.com](http://www.psidirectory.com).

## REACH OUT

Eventually, you're going to have to reach out and make contact with a potential therapist. Check to see if they offer consultation appointments. If they do you may want to take advantage of that low-risk (low-or-free cost) meeting to see if you click. Even if they don't offer consultations, you can often get a good feel for a person via this first contact. You'll want to share a bit about your issue and ask questions that you haven't been able to answer from the "do your homework" section. How you feel about the response you get is a good start to how you might feel about this person in therapy. If it doesn't feel "right," trust your intuition and keep moving on your list.

## IT'S OKAY TO MAKE A CHANGE

If you're not feeling it, that's okay. Therapy should feel safe and comfortable and appropriately challenging. While it's not fun to hop around to different therapists, finding someone you can trust is absolutely essential, so don't be afraid to change course.

It can be a big decision to seek therapy and in order for it to be beneficial to you finding that right fit can be monumental.  
Take your time to research and check in with your feelings about someone and make a change if or when necessary.