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Questions to Ask Any ADHD Therapist

Your Guide to Finding the Right Support - Jessica Shepherd
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Why This Matters


Not all therapists understand ADHD. Some still think it's just "focus problems" or that you can "try harder" your way out of it. These questions will help you find someone who truly gets your neurodivergent brain.




About Their ADHD Knowledge




Essential Questions:

"What specific training do you have in ADHD?"



-  Look for: Formal ADHD qualifications, ongoing education, specialist certifications

-  Red flags: "I've worked with ADHD clients before" (without specific training)



"Do you have lived experience with ADHD or other neurodivergence?"

-  Bonus points: Personal understanding of ADHD challenges
-  Also good: Family members with ADHD, deep professional immersion
-  Red flag: Dismissive of the importance of lived experience

"How do you understand ADHD - is it a disorder, difference, or disability?"

-  Look for: Neurodiversity-affirming language, strengths-based approach
-  Red flags: Only deficit-focused, pathologising language



"What's your view on ADHD medication?"

-  Look for: Neutral, supportive of your choices, collaborative with prescribers
-  Red flags: Anti-medication bias, promises to "cure" ADHD without meds



About Their Approach

Therapy Style Questions:



"How do you adapt your therapy approach for ADHD brains?"

-  Look for: Flexible session structure, movement options, visual aids, shorter goals
-  Red flags: "I treat everyone the same way"



"What happens if I'm late, forget appointments, or need to reschedule?"

-  Look for: Understanding, flexible policies, ADHD-friendly booking systems
-  Red flags: Rigid policies, shame-based responses to ADHD symptoms

"Do you offer different types of sessions? (online, walk-and-talk, etc.)"

-  Look for: Multiple options to suit different needs and preferences
-  Red flags: One-size-fits-all approach



"How do you handle emotional dysregulation and meltdowns?"

-  Look for: Calm, non-judgmental approach, grounding techniques, understanding of ADHD emotional intensity
-  Red flags: Suggests you just need to "calm down" or "control yourself"



About Practical Support

Real-World Help Questions:



"Do you help with practical ADHD challenges like organisation, time management, and executive function?"

-  Look for: Concrete strategies, real-world applications, understanding that these aren't character flaws
-  Red flags: "Just make a schedule and stick to it" type advice



"How do you support clients with work/school accommodations?"

-  Look for: Knowledge of rights, experience with accommodation letters, advocacy support
-  Red flags: Unfamiliarity with disability rights or accommodations

"Do you understand rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD)?"

-  Look for: Clear understanding of RSD, specific strategies for managing it
-  Red flags: Never heard of it, dismisses it as "just anxiety"



"How do you work with ADHD and co-occurring conditions?"

-  Look for: Understanding of common comorbidities (anxiety, depression, trauma, autism)
-  Red flags: Tries to treat everything as separate issues



About Their Understanding of ADHD Experiences

Deeper Understanding Questions:


"What do you know about ADHD masking?"


-  Look for: Understanding of masking, its impact, and how to unmask safely
-  Red flags: Doesn't understand masking or thinks it's always positive

"How do you view ADHD 'symptoms' like hyperfocus, impulsivity, and hyperactivity?"



-  Look for: Balanced view seeing both challenges and strengths
-  Red flags: Only sees negatives, doesn't understand ADHD strengths

"What's your understanding of ADHD in women/girls or late-diagnosed adults?"

-  Look for: Knowledge of different presentations, diagnostic bias, unique challenges

-  Red flags: Outdated stereotypes about ADHD only affecting hyperactive boys

"How do you support clients with ADHD shame and self-criticism?"



-  Look for: Understanding of internalised ableism, compassion-focused approaches
-  Red flags: Suggests shame is motivating or that you need to "take responsibility"





About Crisis and Ongoing Support

Support System Questions:



"What support do you offer between sessions?"

-  Look for: Clear boundaries but understanding of ADHD crisis patterns
-  Red flags: No between-session support or overly rigid boundaries

"How do you handle ADHD-related crises (overwhelm, emotional dysregulation, etc.)?"

-  Look for: Specific crisis plans, increased session frequency options, grounding techniques
-  Red flags: Suggests you just need to "cope better"

"What's your approach to long-term therapy vs short-term intervention?"


-  Look for: Flexibility, understanding that ADHD often benefits from longer-term support
-  Red flags: Rigid time limits, pressure to "graduate" quickly



Practical Considerations

Logistics Questions:

"What are your fees and payment options?"

-  Look for: Clear pricing, flexible payment options, understanding of ADHD financial challenges


"Do you offer packages or sliding scale fees?"

-  Look for: Options that make therapy accessible

"How do you handle insurance/EAP claims?"

-  Look for: Clear process, support with paperwork

"What's your cancellation policy?"

-  Look for: ADHD-friendly policies that account for executive function challenges



Red Flags to Watch Out For

Run Away If They Say:

- "ADHD is overdiagnosed/not real"
- "You just need more discipline/willpower"
- "Everyone's a little ADHD"
- "You can't have ADHD because you're successful/intelligent"
- "Medication is just a crutch"
- "You need to try harder to focus"
- "ADHD is just an excuse"
- "I don't believe in labels"

Green Flags to Look For:

- Uses neurodiversity-affirming language
- Asks about your specific ADHD experiences
- Offers flexible session options

- Understands ADHD strengths and challenges
- Has ongoing ADHD education
- Collaborates rather than prescribes
- Validates your experiences
- Offers practical, real-world strategies



Questions to Ask Yourself

After Meeting a Potential Therapist:

- Do I feel understood and validated?
- Do they seem to "get" my ADHD experiences?
- Am I comfortable being authentic with them?
- Do they offer practical help alongside emotional support?
- Do I feel judged or accepted?
- Are their approaches flexible enough for my needs?
- Do I feel hopeful about working with them?



Pro Tips for Your Search

Before You Meet:

- Check their website for ADHD-specific content
- Look for neurodiversity-affirming language
- See if they mention ADHD qualifications
- Check if they offer consultations

During Consultations:

- Notice if they interrupt or seem impatient
- See how they respond to ADHD-related questions

- Ask about their most successful ADHD client outcomes
- Trust your gut feeling

Red Flag Responses:

- Vague answers about ADHD experience
- Dismissive of your concerns
- Rigid or inflexible approach
- Makes you feel judged or misunderstood

What Good ADHD Therapy Looks Like

You Should Feel:

- Understood and validated
- Safe to be authentically yourself
- Supported in your unique challenges
- Celebrated for your ADHD strengths
- Equipped with practical strategies
- Less alone in your ADHD journey

You Should See:

- Reduced shame and self-criticism
- Better emotional regulation strategies
- Improved relationships and communication
- Practical life skills that work for your brain
- Increased self-compassion and acceptance
- Progress at your own pace

The Bottom Line

You deserve a therapist who truly understands ADHD - not just the textbook version, but the real, lived experience of having an ADHD brain. Don't settle for someone who makes you feel broken or misunderstood.

Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, keep looking.

Ready to Find Your ADHD-Informed Therapist?

At Jessica Shepherd Counselling, I bring both professional ADHD training and lived experience to every session. I understand your brain because I have one too.

Book a free consultation: jessicashepherdcounselling.com
Let's see if we're a good fit - no pressure, no judgment, just understanding.

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