**Tips for Finding the Right Therapist**

If you’re considering therapy for any reason, and especially if it comes following a significant trauma, finding the right therapist is the first hurdle to cross.

Researchers have found that the bond between you and your therapist is likely to have a significant impact on the success of your treatment. For that reason, it is important to do your research, ask questions, and pay attention to your own responses in your search for the therapist that’s right for you.

Here are some things to consider as you seek out a therapist:

**1. Contact your insurance company**

If you plan to pay for therapy through your insurance plan, contact your insurance company or look through your plan’s provider network to identify providers who are covered under your plan. While connecting with your insurance, determine whether your plan limits the number of sessions you can attend each year and whether using an out-of-network therapist will affect your out-of-pocket costs.

**2. Ask someone who knows and you trust**

A referral from a friend, colleague, or doctor you trust is another way to find a therapist who may be a good fit for you. Keep in mind, it’s important to recognize you may have different needs and goals for therapy than the referral source so you still need to do your own research as well.

**3. Use a reliable online database**

A number of mental health organizations maintain up-to-date, searchable databases of licensed therapists. You can search via city, zip code and specialty areas through many of these databases.

**4. Explore local resources**

Communities have many resources to help. Check with your local human services department to find resources. If you’re a student, your school may provide access to a counseling center or on-site counselor. If you’re employed, your human resources team should have a list of therapists available through a workplace wellness or employee assistance program (EAP). If you need counseling related to domestic or sexual abuse, local advocacy organizations often provide services and have resources available to assist with safety. Faith based programs are also strong resources to seek services through.

**5. Reach out to organizations that address your area of concern**

If you’re looking for a therapist to help with a specific mental health issue, there are often national associations, networks, or helplines that focus on specific topics or themes.

**6. Think about your goals ahead of time**

What do you want to accomplish in therapy? When you and your therapist both work together toward the same goals, your outcomes will improve.

If you think some type of medication may help with your symptoms, you’ll want to find a provider who can prescribe medications. If you’ve heard that cognitive behavioral therapy or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy have been effective for others with your condition, you’ll want to look for a therapist with certifications or specialized training in those treatment approaches. If you want to be part of a supportive network of people who understand your experiences, you may want to consider looking for a therapist who’s involved with support groups or group therapy sessions.

Your goals may change as you work with a therapist. It is okay to talk to your therapist about changing the direction of your treatment plan as your needs evolve.

**7. Try an online therapy app**

A variety of online/virtual programs exist for therapy. Some programs match you with a licensed, accredited therapist you can work with online or via phone with a variety of backgrounds and experience. Some people find a digital therapy platform to be more convenient, private and affordable than in-person therapy. Weekly sessions range from $35 to $80 for online therapy.

**8. Ask questions about the things that matter to you**

When you meet your therapist, whether it’s online, on the phone, or in person, it’s not uncommon to completely forget every question you wanted to ask. To keep track of your questions, make a list for a few days before your meeting. Jot down questions as they come to you.

**9. Pay close attention to your own responses**

No matter how many professional accreditations your therapist has, your own feelings of trust and comfort should be your top priority. Will therapy be uncomfortable from time to time? Likely. After all, you’ll be discussing difficult, personal topics, but if you feel uncomfortable with your therapist for any other reason, it’s all right to look for someone else.

Here are a few things to pay attention to as you talk with your therapist:

* Does the therapist interrupt you, or do they listen carefully to what you’re saying?
* Do you feel you can trust your therapist and are you being honest?
* Does the therapist brush off or invalidate your concerns?
* Do you feel seen, heard, and respected during your session?

**The bottom line**

Whether you’re coping with grief or trauma, maneuvering relationship issues or a big life change, want treatment for a mental illness, or are just seeking therapy to learn more about yourself, finding a helpful therapist can make a big difference in your journey.

When you’ve narrowed down your choices, you may find it helpful to think about your goals and questions, so you can be sure you and your therapist are well matched and aligned on your treatment plan.

Ultimately, finding the right therapist is a personal matter. Human connection is at the heart of effective therapy, and you can build that sense of connection whether you meet your therapist in person, on the phone, or online.