

SEARCHING FOR SUNNY SKIES

FIND THE RIGHT HELP TO MOVE FROM STUCK
TO SUCCESSFULLY FORGING AHEAD ON
LIFE'S PATH

MARY M BECKMAN

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the search for mental health and emotional well-being! Life is definitely a journey with many roads presented before us. This includes many road signs and obstacles. A lot of us want to be on the road that leads to happiness and good health. Our mental health and emotional well-being influence this level of happiness and health. Some of us even get on to the right road when a detour sign is put in our path. A detour is usually an event outside of our own doing which might take the form of a parent dying, being laid off from a job, or an injury. With this detour we often wonder how we can ever get back on the road we were on. Sometimes we follow someone else's advice. If change doesn't happen, then we get discouraged and look for another way to get back on that road. After listening to and trying many different ways that we think might get us back on that desired road and failing, despair can start to set in. This is when the idea that "I can't do this alone" might start to make sense to you, and finding someone who has more knowledge to help you may be a good idea.

INTRODUCTION

Think about the fact that when you are having trouble walking, you would go to a physical therapist who would give guidance on how to improve muscle strength or flexibility. Or if you are unsure how to get a job, you would talk to a career counselor or job agency for help in that area, and if you are wanting more spiritual connection with a higher power or God, you would talk with a spiritual leader or spiritual counselor for guidance.

In the same way, when you are dealing with a persistent feeling of sadness, you could see a therapist who would help you unravel why you are sad, see where it comes from, and hopefully they will direct you on how to move through the sadness. Alternatively, if you are feeling pretty good about the road you are on and want to move farther down that road but can't seem to get there, you could talk with a life coach who can guide you through the roadblock to achieve your desire. The important thing to remember is that sometimes people get stuck and need help from others to make a change to improve the situation. Being stuck and needing help to get unstuck is not a failure on your part. Far from it! It is an opening to possibilities that you might not have ever known existed.

This book is designed to help you find that person who can help you to get back on the road to good health and happiness if you've been detoured, or if you want to move farther along the road after encountering a road block.

DIFFERENT CHOICES AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU ON YOUR LIFE'S PATH

I've been stuck many times in my life. Each time I've been mentally or emotionally stuck I have looked for professional help and was able to find it. Most of the time it was a good and helpful experience. However, there were a few times that the professional help was not so helpful, and one experience that was even hurtful.

My first time being stuck in sadness and hopelessness was three months after having given birth. This forced me to seek professional help so that I could learn how to continue in my life here on earth. After a rough morning of struggling with suicidal thoughts and planning, I called a priest friend for help. He suggested that I might have a chemical imbalance and advised me to see a psychiatrist who might be able to help. In meeting with a psychiatrist, I was given antidepressants to take, along with six sessions with a psychologist. This definitely helped me get unstuck for a while.

About eighteen months later, I was again bombarded with sadness, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts after experiencing an intense flashback of being physically violated. My husband's company had an Employee Assistance Program which provided him with a list of mental health professionals that I could choose from. I was able to work with a psychotherapist who used hypnotherapy as part of her practice. This was the beginning of a long process for me to gain the tools I needed in order to live life, not just survive in life.

Many years later (and having experienced a variety of therapists and counselors), I felt prompted by God to help people move through their personal trials. I had successfully moved forward from sad and hopeless, to peace and contentment in my life and wanted to teach others to move forward in their life as well. This led me to get trained as a life coach. When I got stuck starting my life coach business, I engaged with a business life coach who enabled me to start my own empowerment life coach business.

When it comes to looking for someone to help you with your problem of emotional struggle, behavior, or thought challenge, there are a few things you should know before deciding on who you choose to help you. There are many types of psychotherapists and life coaches who are willing and able to help you with your problem.

There are different types of therapists trained in treating mental illnesses and emotional problems, including counselors, psychiatrists, therapists, psychotherapists, or clinical social workers. All provide individual guidance by using psychological methods. "Counselors ask clients about their emotions and experiences, help them process changes and challenges, and provide them with coping strategies. Licensed professional counselors can diagnose and treat mental health disorders. When necessary, they connect them with other

mental health specialists or support groups.”^[1] A psychiatrist can prescribe medication in addition to offering talk therapy for treating a mental illness or emotional problem. Clinical social workers and therapists are also able to diagnose and treat people with emotional problems or mental illnesses.

Psychotherapists usually attend an accredited school to obtain a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology or Counseling and then a Master’s degree in Social Work, Counseling Psychology, Counseling or Marriage and Family Therapy. After obtaining their degree a counselor can decide to be licensed according to state guidelines as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor of Mental Health (LPCC), Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), or Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) to name a few. Some psychotherapists go on to earn a doctorate degree in Psychology (PhD). A psychiatrist also earns a Medical Degree (MD).

A therapist provides individual treatment for mental or emotional disorders, “such as stress, depression, anxiety, insomnia, addiction, bipolar disorder, negative behavior patterns... schizophrenia and other debilitating feelings. Psychotherapy is also called talk therapy and can help treat challenges and symptoms associated with mental health and emotional conditions by helping a person understand their...feelings, hence equipping them to face new challenges both in the present and future. Psychotherapists are nonjudgmental compassionate. They are specifically trained to carefully listen and analyze the psychological needs of their patients and help them accordingly.”^[2]

Life coaches provide assistance in clarifying goals, identifying obstacles in obtaining goals, and come up with ways to overcome the

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obstacles. Life coaches can earn a life coaching certification through an accredited life coaching program. Health Coach Institute, Empowerment Coach Academy, International Association of Professions (IAP) Career College, and Fowler International Academy of Professional Coaching are a few of the providers for certifications. Life coaches can assist a person to improve in many areas including business, leadership, relationships, health, or general wellness.

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF HELPERS

It took a while for me to figure out who was a good fit for me when it came to getting professional help. When I was diagnosed with PTSD as a result of childhood trauma, I had at least an idea of what I needed help with. While in a residential treatment program for thirty days for help with the PTSD and suicidal thoughts, I met with many different counselors and therapists. A primary therapist was assigned to me for daily small group sessions. Other counselors and therapists led workshops for large group sessions.

Once I was out of residential treatment, I needed to find a counselor or therapist to continue my healing process. I went through a couple of therapists who specialized in trauma recovery and had insight in my type of ritual abuse trauma. After experiencing a particularly uncomfortable session with one therapist, I waited a few months before searching out another therapist who was able to really help me move forward. When a

relationship issue arose with my husband, marriage counseling was the next avenue to explore. We would see a marriage counselor for a while and then stop when it wasn't helping us anymore. I would then find another personal counselor or therapist to work more on my issues.

To date I have worked with seven professional therapists for my issues and four marriage counselors for relationship issues. Each time I learned something about myself that helped me move forward in life. I even learned more about my husband which helped us as a couple.

Before starting on the journey of finding the right person to help you, I will explain which professionals are available to help you and what they do in general terms.

The Top Counseling Schools website^[3] lists the following types of counseling:

Clinical Mental Health Counselor – “Clinical mental health counselors are highly trained therapists who treat individuals with mental illnesses...including social anxiety, schizophrenia, clinical depression, and bipolar disorder...perform psychotherapy but can't prescribe medicines...They facilitate positive changes with cognitive behavioral therapy, hypnotherapy, existential therapy, and more.”

Marriage and Family Therapist – “Marriage and family therapists work to resolve conflicts in clients' relationships...Rooting out family dysfunction for a happier home environment is the mission...Some also practice as licensed sex therapists to address couples' issue in the bedroom and improve intimacy.”

School Counselor – “School counselors are Pre-K - 12 educational advocates who work with students...they focus on issues that affect youth's academic achievements as well as social and emotional

development...are licensed to assist in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for children with disabilities.”

Substance Abuse Counselor – “Substance abuse counselors are addiction treatment specialists who strive to end cycles of alcohol and drug abuse. They design rehabilitation plans to get clients sober from substances...They give much-needed emotional support during hard substance withdrawal process and watch for side effects...After detox, they use therapeutic tools to modify addictive behaviors and prevent relapse.”

Trauma and Disaster Therapist – “Trauma and disaster therapists are crisis counselors who help victims recover after painful, life-altering events. They serve clients who have suffered lasting physical and mental damage from disasters. Most of their clients fit the DSM-5 criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder...Getting survivors to cope with horrific memories and nightmares is the goal.” DSM is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders that is used by professional counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists for diagnosing mental disorders.

Rehabilitation Counselor – “Rehabilitation counselors are disability specialists who help clients adjust to life with a chronic or acute health condition. They see clients from age 0-100 and develop plans to minimize the effects of disabilities. Many of their clients have incurable disabilities like autism, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, sickle cell anemia, and spina bifida. Others may need to recover from injuries or cancer treatment. ...rehabilitation counselors ensure clients can cope with their limitations and have an enjoyable, productive life.”

Vocational Counselor – “Vocational counselors are job consultants who assist teens and adults in finding the right career path of their

dreams. ...They help clients establish realistic achievable career goals based on their interests.”

Creative Arts Therapist – “Creative arts therapists are imaginative counselors who encourage clients to express their emotions in diverse art media. They instill the confidence clients need to let out repressed feelings through artwork. Creating personalized works of visual or performing art can be cathartic and healing for clients...They focus more on substance than artistic talent to help clients overcome life’s obstacles.”

Bereavement Counselor – “Bereavement counselors are grief therapists who assist clients struggling to deal with the death of loved ones. They help grieving clients who found it difficult to accept that their close relative, friend, or even pet has died. Some clients might be suffering grief from divorce, a job loss, retirement, trauma, or relocation...They address common grief symptoms, including uncontrollable crying, denial, sorrow, shock and eating disturbances.”

Student Affairs Counselor – “Student affairs counselors are higher education professionals who play many pivotal roles in guiding college attendees to graduation. Student affairs is a huge umbrella term used to cover all non-academic campus activities that nurture learners’ success...They better the campus climate for a positive college experience.”

Genetic Counselor – “Genetic counselors are skilled scientists who assess a client’s risks for developing inherited medical conditions. They conduct genetic testing that extracts DNA samples from blood, saliva, or hair...They educate clients about the benefits and limitations of DNA testing before the procedure...Genetic

counselors can only tell clients about their risks of experiencing health issues like breast cancer and Parkinson's disease.”

Music Therapist – “Music therapists are specialized song makers who harness the healing powers of music to assist clients with mental health disorders. They help clients channel their thoughts, fears, and hurts in to musical melodies...Music therapists utilized all forms of acoustic arts as a creative outlet for emotions. Music helps reduce anxiety, improve mood, soothe pain, boost energy, abate loneliness, and teach positive social skills.”

Correctional Counselor – “Correctional counselors are prison treatment specialists who aim to rehabilitate inmates locked behind bars. They perform mental health screenings to assess the psychological fitness of jailed offenders...they craft customized counseling plans to address each prisoner's needs...Correctional counselors provide their expert opinion to parole boards to suggest or deny inmate releases.”

Pastoral Counselor – “Pastoral counselors are religious leaders who deliver faith-based therapy to address individual, family, or community problems...In every religion, pastoral counselors improve people's well-being by strengthening their spiritual connection. They apply scriptural passages as guidance to morally resolve life challenges. They say prayers for clients to seek forgiveness and assistance from their God or Supreme Being...Pastoral counselors blend therapy with theology and ministry to form strong spiritual bonds in faith settings.”

Military Counselor – “Military counselors are government personnel who meet the therapeutic needs of active-duty or veteran Armed Forces members. They work on military bases to counsel enlisted soldiers

during their training and deployment...Military counselors start with mental health tests to examine servicemen and servicewomen. They customize an appropriate intervention plan to cope with issues on the battlefield and home front...Providing support, PTSD treatment, suicide prevention, and job placement services is their duty.” PTSD is post-traumatic stress disorder that is present in persons who have experienced one or more gut-wrenching experiences in their life that are hard to process mentally and emotionally.

Nutritional Counselor – “Nutritional counselors are food gurus who seek to modify problematic eating behaviors for a healthier diet. They fortify clients’ motivation for consuming a healthy mix of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein...Nutritional counselors help clients with obesity, hypothyroidism, depression, and binge eating disorder lose extra pounds...Breaking emotional bonds to food is imperative. In cases of anorexia, cancer, Addison’s disease, and Crohn’s disease, they assist clients with gaining more weight. Nutritional counselors establish a science-based dietary plan...also integrate fitness regimens to improve clients’ overall lifestyle.”

Equine-Assisted Therapist – “Equine-assisted therapists are skilled stablehands who counsel clients with the help of horses, donkeys, mules, and other breeds...They encourage clients to talk to horses and communicate their feelings with zero judgment. Equine-assisted therapists teach clients how to groom, feed, halter, and clean up after horses...Caring for a horse can provide clients more confidence to overcome negative, self-defeating thoughts. Equine-assisted therapists use horses to instill a higher regard for living things and control angry impulses.”

Sports Counselor – “Sports counselors are athletic consultants who evaluate how mental health affects performance on the field or court.

They run psychological assessments on athletes and identify ways to boost performance...Sports counselors discuss hurdles that are holding athletes back and find tactics to jump over them. They teach athletes how to relieve anxiety and better prepare for focus during games or matches...They're sports medicine staff who focus on the mind rather than the muscles to meet players' psycho-emotional needs."

Community Counselor – “Community counselors are social welfare experts who strive to eradicate widespread, systemic health issues. They seek to solve community-level issues for large-scale healing and wellness...Most community counselors work for nonprofit organizations to enhance the morale of a specific population...If needed, they're trained to deliver therapy to community members impacted by violence or inequality. They advocate for real, pervasive societal changes to better the lives of whole groups of people.”

Different types of life coaches are listed here:

Leadership Coach – assists with improving leadership skills by exploring strengths and weak areas to improve. Using tools that examine thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. A leadership coach can help strengthen weak areas, improve interpersonal skills, and devise strategies for conflict management.

Spiritual Coach – assists in finding purpose and deeper meaning in life by using self-discovery tools. They can direct people to have reliance on a higher power to assist self-discovery and personal growth.

Health Coach – assists in improving physical health by addressing issues of smoking, stress, nutrition, sleep, activity, and time management.

Fitness Coach – assists as a personal trainer in improving fitness areas of losing weight, gaining muscle and other fitness-related areas. A fitness coach develops an exercise routine, recommends an eating plan, and makes sure exercises are correctly performed.

Financial Coach – assists in showing how to manage money, build savings, create a financial plan, or pay down debt.

Relationship Coach – assists in developing healthy communication strategies and skills for healthy personal relationships.

Retirement Coach – assists in developing lifestyle goals and strategies for retirement. A retirement coach can help create a plan for transition into retirement life.

Business or Entrepreneurship Coach – assists small business owners to improve their business by developing business strategies, improving mindset, and planning for success.

Career Coach – assists in setting career goals, planning strategies for success, writing a résumé, interviewing skills, and negotiating tools.

Family Coach – assists in developing strategies to achieve better family life dynamics. A family coach can meet with one or more members of the family during a session. Respect and conflict resolution techniques are some of the tools that can be provided.

Performance Coach – assists in improving abilities in the workplace, including self-belief, confidence and awareness.

Empowerment Coach – assists in providing guidance in every aspect of life to find confidence and fulfillment in life.

IMPORTANT TOOLS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU

A number of cognitive and mind-body tools are available to help work through inaccurate or negative thinking and intense emotions. Some of these tools include Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Thought Field Technique (TFT), Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), inner child work, and somatic therapy. Cognitive therapy tools include CBT, NET, NLP, ABA, and inner child work. Mind-body tools include EMDR, TFT, EFT, and somatic therapy. Christian based inner healing work with protocols like Splankna and SOZO is also available.

These are just some of the tools that are available. In the course of my healing from past trauma, I found EMDR, TFT, somatic therapy, inner child work, and CBT extremely helpful in being able to work through the negative and destructive thinking that I had developed.

When I worked with a Splanchna practitioner, I was able to experience spiritual freedom.

EMDR uses activation of both sides of the brain so that emotions connected to past painful events can be lessened in intensity. Activating both sides of the brain can be done by having eyes move right to left a number of times, or listening to alternating sounds from left ear to right ear, or tapping feet alternately while thinking of an emotion related to a situation. A trained EMDR practitioner guides the person during this process.

TFT uses the meridian points in your body in addition to bilateral stimulation, using a tapping procedure. A number of points along the meridian lines are gently tapped using fingertips in a specific order depending on the emotion that is presenting itself while the client focuses on the thoughts, feelings and physical sensations of that emotion. This technique is helpful in the treatment of stress, anger, anxiety, trauma, phobias, depression, obsession and grief. A trained TFT practitioner leads the person through the tapping and bilateral stimulation procedure.

EFT is very similar to TFT as the meridian tapping points used are the same. The difference is that the tapping procedure is the same for all emotions and words are spoken about the emotion being worked on during the tapping. A trained EFT practitioner leads the person through the words, while performing the tapping and bilateral stimulation procedure.

CBT challenges the way a person thinks about a situation. A trained CBT practitioner works with a person to determine what thoughts and behaviors are behind an unfavorable emotion and points out to the person what may not be accurate or what may be negative. The practitioner then encourages the person to look at the inaccurate or

negative thought or behavior and to come up with a different way of thinking or behaving. The person then practices this new way of thinking or behaving which then improves their emotional state.

NET guides a person through remembering and verbalizing a past traumatic event. A trained NET practitioner reminds the person that they are here in the present and safe to process the traumatic event and emotions associated with that event. This process enables the person to better understand the past trauma and move forward from it.

NLP uses imagery training, mirroring, modeling and other techniques to help a person view their situation from a different point of view. A trained NLP practitioner guides a person through mental exercises in order for the person to gain more clarity around a past situation or to open up possibilities for the person's future.

ABA uses positive reinforcement and antecedents-behaviors-consequences methods to understand and change a person's behavior. A trained ABA practitioner guides a person to identify the undesirable behavior and the thoughts and consequences that go along with that behavior. The practitioner then works with the person to determine what strategy for changes in thoughts or behaviors might work for the person in their desire to eliminate the unwanted behavior and its consequences.

Inner child work helps a person connect to their past childhood self. This connection is made in an effort to gain understanding into why they behave, think or feel a certain way, especially when they are triggered. The word "triggered" means that an emotional reaction is out of proportion to the current event. Guided imagery or journaling helps a person connect their past experience as a child with what is happening in their life now. It can bring about discovery

as to when a particular way of thinking, feeling, or behaving first started as a coping mechanism. The person, as an adult, can then reassure that child part of themselves internally that they are accepted and loved. A person may then be able to accept that the coping thought, behavior, or feeling which helped them to survive in the past is no longer needed.

Somatic therapy uses physical sensation focus to explore a person's problem. A trained somatic therapist works with a person by using techniques such as visualization, massage, breath work, meditation, dance, grounding, or sensation awareness. These techniques are very helpful for a person who feels disconnected with their physical awareness and desires to be more in touch with their physical body.

Splankna is a biblically-based, mind-body tool for inner healing. "The Splankna Therapy protocol aims at handling the emotional, physical, and spiritual fuel behind psychological symptoms at the same time so that they are thoroughly relieved with the least probability of recidivism."^[4] Prayer, clearing traumatic emotions, forgiveness, and breaking agreements are elements of this protocol.

SOZO is a "prophetic ministry for all-embracing healing and for deliverance from bondage. SOZO helps uncover the roots that are keeping you from living a life of freedom and fullness."^[5] Face to Face Ministries (facetofaceministries.org) with Cathy Little and Melinda Wilson wrote a book called "Streams of Healing" which explains more about some of the Christian based inner healing protocols that are available.

YOUR GUIDE TO TYPES OF HELP

Whether you are looking for help to get through a situation or to move forward on a particular goal, it is good to have a reference for types of counselors/therapists or life coaches available to help you. Below are two reference tables with information that can help you in your search.

Table 1. Counselor/Therapist Reference

Symptom/Struggle	Counselor/Therapist Type
Generally Sad/Depressed	Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, or Mental Health Counselor
Sad/Depressed because someone close died	Bereavement or Grief Counselor
Angry all the time	Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, or Mental Health Counselor
Having trouble losing or gaining weight	Nutritional counselor
Feeling spiritually lost	Pastoral Counselor
Struggling with spouse/significant other or family member	Marriage and Family Therapist
Want to stop using drugs	Substance Abuse Counselor
Having a hard time with disturbing images or feelings after witnessing or going through a disaster	Trauma and Disaster Therapist
Not sure what kind of career to pursue	Vocational or Career Counselor
An extreme fear or phobia that interferes with your life	Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, or Mental Health Counselor
Frequent thoughts of suicide or thinking life is not worth living	Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, or Mental Health Counselor

Table 2. Life Coach Reference

Desire	Life Coach Type
Not sure of purpose in life	Vision Coach, Empowerment Coach
Want to exercise better	Fitness Coach
Want to eat better	Nutrition Coach, Health Coach
Want to do better in business	Business Coach, Entrepreneurship Coach
Desire to have better spiritual life	Spiritual Coach
Want to change jobs	Career Coach
Want to find a life partner or have better communication your current life partner	Relationship Coach
Want help in getting through a particular problem	Empowerment Coach
Want help in planning for life in retirement	Retirement Coach
Want help in handling finances better	Financial Coach
Want to have better leadership skills	Leadership Coach
Want help in having a family that is healthy and engaging	Family Coach

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

When I wanted help in dealing with emotions and information in flashbacks about past sexual abuse, I needed to find a therapist. Since the psychotherapist who worked with me at the residential treatment center helped me greatly, I decided to include their education and experience in my list of questions for a potential new therapist. Here is the list of questions I used:

- What is your education degree?
- Do you work with adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse?
- Do you use cognitive behavioral therapy in your practice?
- Do you use inner child work as part of your practice?
- Are you a survivor of sexual abuse?
- Do you give homework?
- What is your fee?
- How often would we meet?

Having a list of questions will help to guide you in finding the right therapist or life coach for your particular situation or need. Now take the time to write down a list of questions that are important to you. Answering the following questions will help guide you in creating a list of questions that are important to help you find a potential therapist or life coach:

1. What is the thing you want to get help with?
2. What type of professional would you like to see? Would it be a therapist or a life coach?
3. Is the type of license or education of a therapist or life coach important to you? If it is, write down what type of license or education you would prefer to work with. If necessary, refer to chapter 2 on the types of professionals available to help you in order.
4. What types of tools would you like to try with the therapist or life coach?
5. How much can you afford to pay? Do you have insurance that you can use for these sessions?
6. Do you want the therapist or life coach to have had the same type of experience that you have had? For example, if you grew up in a household where both parents used drugs, would you want your therapist or life coach to have had the same experience?
7. Do you want homework from a therapist or life coach?
Asking a therapist or life coach if they will give homework is good to do if you want to continue improving your circumstance outside of a session.

There are other standard questions that always need to be asked. They include:

- What is your fee?
- Do you have a sliding fee scale?
- What insurance do you take?
- What is your policy for missing an appointment or late cancellations?
- How often would we meet?

Add any further questions you would also like to ask here.

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Now that you have all of your questions ready to ask, write them on a separate sheet of paper.

I highly recommend that you have a list of at least three therapists or life coaches, with their names and phone numbers available, to who you could approach with these questions.

WHO YOU COULD CONTACT

Your answers to questions one and two above, “What is the thing you want to get help with? What type of professional would you like to see, would it be a therapist or a life coach?” will guide you in your search when speaking to someone from an Employee Assistance Program, Medical Insurance plan, or doing a general web search. If you are fortunate enough to be employed with a company that has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), then you can contact them for a list of therapists or life coaches in your area. If you have a medical insurance plan, you can check to see if the plan covers the type of sessions you need. There may be a limited number of sessions that are covered in a year or other time period. A list of preferred therapists in your area might also be available. If you don’t have an EAP or medical insurance plan, then you can always search on the web for a therapist or life coach in your area. Type the answers that you wrote to questions one and two above into your web browser’s search bar along with the words “near me” or your city name, examples for this include “therapists who help with depression

near me” or “therapists who help with depression Billings, MT.” If you are open remote sessions with a therapist or life coach, then search with the words “therapists who help with depression online.” Once the list of therapists or life coaches appears on your screen, read through the first screen or two and select three of the people listed.

A word of caution when selecting a person to call – be aware of whether or not you would be comfortable meeting with or talking with someone with whom you might be attracted to in an intimate way. Unhealthy emotional or professional attachments might occur during your time together should you decide to use them for help in your situation. In the long run this can prove challenging to your healing and probably not helpful to either you or the professional involved.

Write down the contact information for two or three potential helpers here:

1.....

2.....

3.....

INTERVIEWING YOUR POTENTIAL HELPER

Start by assuring yourself that you are on a fact-finding quest. The person on the other end of the phone will most likely not have met you or know who you are, so you are safe to ask questions in this phase of your quest. If you feel nervous, do some jumping jacks or some other physical movement to help settle your nerves. You can even ask a friend to be with you while you call.

Have your list of questions and a pen or pencil ready before you dial the number of the first person on your list. When you reach that person, you will be able to ask your questions and write down answers.

Be ready for an answering machine or voicemail message. Write down your name, phone number and what you are looking to get help with, preferably using no more than two or three sentences. If you reach an answering machine, read what you wrote.

When the person calls back, thank them for returning your call and ask them to hold on while you get your list of questions to ask. Once you have your questions and a pen or pencil, you can ask your questions. Be sure to write down the answers to each question. After you have asked all of your questions and received an answer for all of them, thank the person for their time and let them know that you will be in touch if you decide to proceed further.

After you end the call, be sure to take a breath. You have completed a very important step in moving forward! Take a break if you need to before calling the next person on your calling list. Repeat the same process for both the second and third person on your list.

Now you can look at the answers and decide whether it would be okay to schedule an initial appointment. When you call the person to set up an initial appointment, be sure to write down the date, time, and location and other information.

It is okay to schedule an initial meeting with any or all of the people you contacted. After you have met with those you are interested in, you can then decide which one you would like to work with.

If no one answered all of your questions to your liking, then you can continue to select other people from the web search, EAP, or insurance plan list to call.

UNDERSTANDING MORE ABOUT THE INITIAL MEETING AND COMMITMENT

An initial meeting is a “get to know you better” session. The therapist or life coach will be asking most of the questions this time. They are gathering information about your situation and what you want to get help with. Once they have asked their questions, they will tell you their plan on how they can help you with your situation. If their plan sounds reasonable to you, you can decide to move forward. If their plan doesn’t sound good to you, then you can politely decline or say you “want to think about it.”

Once you decide that you want to work with a person, you will be asked to review and sign an agreement to work with them. The agreement will typically cover session duration, frequency and cost. It will also include steps for you to take if you can’t make an appointment and any other situations that may arise. There may be certain hours that the person will be available for contact outside of regular sessions.

After you agree to meet with a therapist or life coach, remember that you will only meet with them for as long as you feel that you are seeing some sort of improvement in your situation. If you ever get the sense that you are no longer feeling good about meeting with that therapist or life coach, it is okay to stop seeing them.

Be aware of your own boundaries – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. If any of those boundaries are being crossed in any meeting, be sure to acknowledge it internally and address it with the therapist or life coach if safe to do so, or you can request that the session be stopped for now. It is okay to get a second opinion from another person about what made you uncomfortable during a session.

If you feel that the therapist or life coach is not responding to your calls or texts in a reasonable timeframe, then you can address this with the therapist or life coach at the next meeting. Get expectations on communication cleared up so that you both know what is reasonable. Remember that life happens to therapists and life coaches too!

The work you do inside and outside the sessions is what will help you to move forward. If you find yourself not wanting to do the work outside of the session that the therapist or life coach suggests with your agreement, be sure to tell them you didn't do the work during the next session. Discovering the deeper reason behind why you didn't do the work will be part of the work ahead for you.

SUMMARY

Now that the details have been put down, here is the summary of how to get the right mental or emotional well-being help you need:

1. Learn about the types of help available.
2. Learn about some of the tools that can be used.
3. Decide what help you want.
4. Write list of questions to ask.
5. Get a list of people to contact.
6. Call each person on the contact list and ask your questions.
7. Schedule and go to an initial meeting with whom you decide might be a good fit based on answers to your questions.
8. Decide to move forward by agreeing to work with the person who you feel might be able to help you in the way you need.

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