

What To Look for in a Therapist

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Finding the right therapist may take some time and work, but it's worth the effort. The connection you have with your therapist is very important. You need someone who you can trust—someone you feel comfortable talking to about difficult and intimate subjects. So take some time at the beginning to find the right therapist. Shop around and ask questions when interviewing potential therapists.

Experience is important. One of the main reasons for seeing a therapist, rather than simply talking to a friend, is experience. Look for a therapist who is experienced in treating the problems that you have. Often, therapists have special areas of focus, such as depression or eating disorders. Experienced therapists have seen the problems you're facing again and again, which broadens their view and gives them more insight. And for some problems, such as trauma or sexual concerns, seeing a specialist is absolutely essential.

Look into licensing. Credentials aren't everything, but if you're paying for a licensed professional, make sure the therapist holds a current license and is in good standing with the state regulatory board. Regulatory boards vary by state and by profession. Also check for complaints against the therapist.

Trust your instincts. Even if your therapist looks great on paper, if the connection doesn't feel right—if you don't trust the person or feel like they truly care—go with another choice. A good therapist will respect this choice and should never pressure you or make you feel guilty.

What's most important in a therapist or counselor is a sense of connection, safety, and support. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it seem like the therapist truly cares about me and my problems?
- Does the therapist accept me for who I am?
- Would you feel comfortable revealing personal information to this individual?
- Do I feel as if I can be honest and open with this therapist?
- Is the therapist a good listener?
- Does the therapist pick up on my feelings? Make me feel heard?

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