

tips for

FINDING A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

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Selecting a mental health professional may seem like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. Choosing a therapist who you feel comfortable and safe with will be essential throughout your therapy journey.



Here are some helpful tips to use when seeking a mental health professional that suits your needs.

Tip #1

THINK ABOUT WHO YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

- It may be helpful to begin thinking about the type of professional you would like to work with -- maybe you prefer someone who takes a more holistic approach, or someone who specializes in specific issues you may be seeking help for (ie. anxiety, depression, family therapy.)
- Here are some common professionals and their specific training
 - Psychologist: psychologists have a doctorate degree in psychology (Ph.D or Psy.D) and are licensed to treat several different disorders and concerns.
 - Social Worker: Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) have a Master's degree in social work (MSW) along with additional clinical training and are also qualified to provide therapy.
 - Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC): LPC's usual have their Master's in mental health counseling and are licensed to provide therapy.
 - Psychiatrists: a psychiatrist is a physician (MD or DO) who specializes in medication for mental health.

Tip #2

WHERE TO LOOK

- A great place to start looking is GOOGLE. Simply search "therapists in my area" or something more specific. *Psychologytoday.com* is another great resource that provides a more detailed search.
- Don't hesitate to 'shop around'. Remember, therapy is a personal experience and you want to make sure the individual you are working with provides the care you are looking for.

- If you have health insurance, call your insurer's information number and ask for a list of mental health providers in your area that are covered under your insurance.
 - If you do not have health insurance, you may have to pay out-of-pocket. Some therapist's offer a 'sliding scale' fee based on your ability to pay. Also, mention if you are a student or if you have served in the military. Discounts may be offered.
 - A low-cost option to check out: [betterhelp.com](https://www.betterhelp.com)

Tip #3

MAKING THE CALL

- Once you have gathered a few options, its time to call to schedule an appointment!
- If you're told that new patients have to wait many months for an appointment, it would be wise to make an appointment anyway. Then call the second and third numbers on your list. You can always cancel your first appointment if you find someone who can help you sooner.
- If you feel you can't wait for help, see your primary care doctor for treatment and support until you can see a mental health professional.

Tip #4

ASK QUESTIONS

- As the client, you have every right to ask questions. Here are a few that you may feel inclined to ask during the phone call or even during your first session. Keep in mind, if a receptionist answers instead of the therapist, he/she should be able to answer these questions as well.

- Have you ever worked with clients experiencing " " ?; How long have you been a therapist?; What are your areas of expertise?; How often will we meet?; How long before I feel better?; Do you have experience treating people from my cultural background?; Do you accept insurance? If not, what are your fees? Do you offer a sliding scale fee?

Tip #5

AFTER THE FIRST CALL

- Choosing the right mental health professional for you does not end once you schedule the appointment. It is not uncommon to switch therapists during your treatment if you feel it isn't working for you. Here are a few questions to ask yourself when evaluating your progress with your therapist.
 - Do you find your therapist likable and trustworthy?
 - How available is your therapist?
 - Do you think this therapist has the potential to provide the help you're looking for?
 - Do you feel you can't share certain information with your therapist out of fear of judgement?
 - Is your therapist respecting your personal goals for therapy?
 - Does he or she listen without interrupting?
- Everyone's therapy experience is different. It is OK if you do not feel your therapist is a good fit for you. If this is the case, it may be time to search for another therapist.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT THERAPY

MYTH: Therapy is for people with serious issues.

FACT: Therapy is for people who want a helping hand and have the desire to learn tools and techniques to become mentally healthy and live a better life.

MYTH: I don't need a therapist. I can solve my own problems.

FACT: Therapy has nothing to do with intelligence or ability. A good therapist will provide an outsider's perspective and implement professional techniques to enhance your personal insight.

MYTH: Therapy is for whiners and complainers.

FACT: Therapy is hard work. A good therapist will listen to your complaints, but then challenge them and provide advice to either shift your perspective or make alternative decisions.

MYTH: Therapy is too expensive.

FACT: Therapy prices range extensively. However, most insurance companies will provide you with a list of in-network providers. If you do not have insurance, many therapists offer discounted fees for those in need.

MYTH: My therapist will tell me to take medication.

FACT: A good therapist will never 'tell' you to do anything. However, a therapist may recommend medication based on your concerns. You have every right to politely decline this suggestion. Besides, many mental health issues are treatable without medication.