

THE CENTER FOR TRAUMA & RESILIENCE

Suggestions for Choosing a Therapist

Once you have decided to start therapy, choosing a therapist can be an intimidating process. Doing some preparation can help you be successful. The following suggestions can help you accomplish your goals:

1. **Call** and/or visit with several therapists before making your decision about which therapist you want to see. Your relationship with your therapist is an important aspect of what makes counseling work. You will want to ask the therapists:
What model or type of counseling they provide?
How long they have been in practice?
Ask about their formal or informal education. Degrees? Licenses?
What is their specialty?
How long do they anticipate working with you?
2. **Make a list** of what you want to accomplish in therapy. Briefly discuss what you hope to accomplish and ask them if they think they can help you reach your goals. Writing it down doesn't mean that you will accomplish it, but it will give the therapist, and you, a better understanding of what you are looking for in therapy and may help you discover some of your long-term goals.
3. **Listen** to what they say, and just as importantly, how they say it. Do the therapists put you at ease? Are their speech pattern, accent, and vocabulary easy for you to follow and understand? Do they sound empathetic and caring?
4. **Trust yourself** and your impressions. If one therapist looks more impressive on paper, but another one makes you feel more comfortable, go with your heart and pick the one whom you feel you can be more honest with. Research has shown that the relationship between the therapist and client is the single greatest element in the facilitation of positive change and growth for the client.

The Center for Trauma & Resilience suggests the following considerations to help you choose a therapist:

- A. **Cost.** Will the therapist give you a free first consultation? What types of payment are accepted? Does the therapist accept Victim's Compensation, Medicaid, or private insurance? Does the therapist offer a sliding scale based on your ability to pay? Does the therapist accept pro bono clients?
- B. **Location.** Is the therapist's office accessible? Does the location create a hardship for you?
- C. **Gender, Ethnicity, Culture, and Language.**
Do you have any gender preference for a therapist?
Do you prefer to work with a person of a particular race or ethnicity?
What age?
Do you have any specific communication needs due to language or ability?
Does the therapist offer complementary work: mindfulness, body work, ear acupuncture, yoga, journaling /narrative therapy, reiki, drumming, art therapy, chanting, etc.
- D. **Availability.**
Does the therapist have emergency coverage services?
Are telephone crisis sessions available?
Is the therapist available to talk with partners, family, friends, etc.?
- E. **Assessment and Evaluation.**
Can the therapist provide assessments or evaluations if needed?
Does the therapist work with providers who could assist with medication if needed?