

## Finding the Right Therapist for You

Graduate school, clinical training and licensure are all essential aspects of a qualified therapist. However, there are also other important considerations. These include the following:

- You feel accepted, without judgmental assumptions being made
- An effort is made to help you explore your life-experiences and their meaning to you
- There is a depth of willingness to understand the unique qualities of your problem
- Opportunity is provided to work through what has brought you into therapy
- Boundaries are clearly maintained, with no sexual innuendos or business offers
- Your feedback in what is therapeutically helpful to you is regularly requested
- There is openness to others participating in your therapy (spouse, partner, family, friends)
- You feel respect for your perspective, including when it is not mutually held
- Daily life-pressures are acknowledged and accounted for as a part of therapy planning

Other considerations that are important include the following:

*Gender.* Do you feel more that it will be more helpful to work with a female or a male therapist? Sometimes the nature of your problem is important to the gender that is right for you. Consider trusting your instincts as you choose.

*Approach.* Does the therapist use a one-size-fits-all approach, or does he use a variety of skills? How a therapist works with you on a problem will depend upon a wide range of considerations. These include personal background, clinical training, as well as professional style and insight.

*Schedule.* Are you willing to invest your time and energy into your work of therapy? The effort required often goes beyond just showing up for a session, with exercises assigned as a part of treatment. Depending upon the issues being addressed, sessions may be variable in frequency. For some, they are more helpful when held twice a week. For others, twice a month is a more helpful pace. Discuss with a prospective therapist his recommendations for session frequency, to see if they will fit your specific situation.

*Fee.* Do you feel financially comfortable with the fee? Some therapists are enrolled in insurance networks. Others do not participate in any insurance to better preserve the therapeutic integrity of the work being done. Discussing the fee, along with reviewing your goals for therapy, will help you understand the approximate cost of your therapy.

As you begin, it is entirely normal to feel somewhat nervous during therapy, especially for your first several visits. After all, you are revealing yourself about sensitive problems that likely have been a source of significant concern to you for a while.

Bottom line: clear, honest and transparent communication between you and your therapist is important for your work toward your goals, for a life with greater personal meaning and more satisfying relationships.

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