

A GUIDE TO FINDING A THERAPIST¹

EMERGENCY INFORMATION: If you, or someone you know, is currently in crisis, experiencing severe distress, or self-harm, please go to your nearest emergency room or call 911. If you want to talk to someone immediately, call or text [988 \(Lifeline\)](tel:988).

Making a decision to work with a mental health professional is not an easy decision, and finding one can be a daunting process. In choosing a therapist, keep in mind that you are the *consumer*. You are purchasing a service from a professional and have choices about whether you want to begin such a relationship.

How do I start?

- Decide what type of therapy you are seeking: individual, couples, family
- Figure out your budget: Do you have health insurance? If yes, what does it cover? Can you afford to pay out of pocket fees?

Where do I look?

- If you want/need to use your health insurance, first check out their directory of providers. Contact your health insurance provider to ask if they cover “out-of-network” providers. If your therapist does not take your health insurance, your health insurance may be willing to take a superbill issued by the therapist and reimburse you for part, or all, of the fees.
- Other directories that can be helpful (use filters to narrow your search according to preferences including race/ethnicity, religion, gender, etc): [Psychology Today](#), [Therapist.com](#), [American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists Locator](#)

What is considered Christian counseling?

“Christian counseling” is a broad term that may include lay counselors, pastoral counselors, [nouethic counselors](#), and Christian mental health professionals. Christians can receive excellent care from both Christian and non-Christian professionals. For more reading on this topic, check out [this webpage from Christian Asian Mental Health \(CAMH\)](#) that has additional links to other books and articles on this topic. This [resource page](#) sponsored by the Christian Community Development Association has many links to mental health-related resources organized by topics and groups.

What should I look for when I’m trying to find a therapist?

- Some therapists offer a free 10-15 minute consultation for new clients. If they don’t, you can bring up questions during your first session. Some questions (in no particular order) to ask are included on the next page.

¹ The organizations, links, and information presented on this page are for informational purposes only and do not necessarily represent the advice or opinions of New Life Fellowship, nor do they constitute professional opinions regarding appropriate mental health treatment.

Questions to ask a counselor/therapist:

1. *What kinds of experience have you had working with people like me (fill in the blank with your reasons for seeking therapy)?*
2. *What is your approach to faith/spirituality in your work with clients?*
3. *What are your specializations? Or, what kinds of clients have you typically worked with?*
4. *Will you discuss my treatment plans with me? What happens if we disagree about my goals?*
5. *Are you licensed by or registered with the state?*
6. *Have you ever had a charge of unethical conduct brought against you?*
7. *For what length of time do you usually treat clients?*
8. *Is there anyone with whom you will be discussing my case?*
9. *Have you had experience with other people in similar situations?*
10. *How much do you charge for each therapy session? How long will our appointment be?*
11. *If I decide that I would like to work with you, are there any other interviews that you require me to complete?*

- Look for someone you feel comfortable with, within the first few sessions. Remember that sometimes it may take several attempts before finding someone who is the right fit for you.
- Be prepared to feel nervous or uncomfortable at times with your therapist. After all, they are not meant to be a friend who will nod and agree with everything you say. Occasionally, you may get angry with your therapist, and a good therapist will be able to cope with that and not get angry back at you.
- Pay attention to the relational dynamics with your therapist. If you feel uncomfortable with responses from the therapist (e.g. avoidance in answering your questions, minimizing, or defensiveness), trust your judgment.
- Certain kinds of therapies focused on processing trauma have research support and require advanced training beyond graduate education and licensing requirements. [Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing \(EMDR\)](#) therapy, [Internal Family Systems](#), and [Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy \(AEDP\)](#) are some examples of these specialized methods. It is wise to do a Google search and read more about the kinds of therapies that your potential therapist uses with their clients.
- For couples therapy, [Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy \(EFT\)](#), developed by the late Dr. Sue Johnson, as well as [the Gottmann Method](#), are among some modalities that have gained research support.
- Bear in mind that some therapists use a combination of several approaches in their work with clients.
- The best relationship is where you are able to look back and see that during the difficult times in your life journey, your therapist was there, like a patient listener, hoping for and watching your recovery. When you finally "get there" they are almost as pleased as you are!