

How to Hire Your Therapist

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Businesses that build complicated projects use project management software to prioritize tasks and create step-by-step action plans. After a team huddle both the business and the client have a clear plan of what is going to happen and when. The client is a key participant in the huddle. This lets the client know whether the business can handle the job and the outcomes the client should expect by the end. Human beings are complicated projects, so why don't mental health providers approach psychotherapy the same way with clients?

The not-so-secret truth about psychotherapy is that human beings are not so neat and tidy to work with, thus treatment planning, as we call it, can be really difficult. We acknowledge that we could do a better job, but there are also things that you can do to improve your experiences. As therapists screen potential clients to see if they will be a good fit, the client can do this as well. Below are some questions that you can ask a provider and some insights to consider when determining if that therapist is the right fit for you.

1. How much experience do you have treating someone with my issues?

This is probably the most important and yet the most simple question to ask, "Have you seen this before?" If you can't get a straight answer to this question, that's not a good sign.

2. What type of training do you have?

Aside from graduate school, does the therapist have any specialized training in treating specific disorders or with models of practice? Some examples of specialization in certain disorders might be mood disorders, substance abuse, anxiety, trauma, or psychosis. Is the therapist trained in cognitive behavior therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, dialectical behavioral therapy, or hypnosis?

3. What are the different treatment options?

There are many different ways to approach therapy and individual therapists prefer different theoretical perspectives. A cognitive behavioral approach will focus reframing or challenging thoughts and behaviors in order to problem solve and change the way you feel. A psychodynamic therapist may focus more on your dreams and unconscious thoughts in order to make sense of present problems. The therapist should be able to give you the pros and cons of each approach.

4. What can I expect in my sessions with you?

It can be very overwhelming to walk into a therapist's office and not know what to expect. Will the therapist guide the session or will you be expected to talk more? Does the therapist use certain activities in sessions or give homework assignments?

5. How long do you expect treatment to last?

While it may be hard to provide a specific answer for length of treatment, it can help to know if the provider expects treatment to last for a few months or a few years. There is no right or wrong answer but knowing how the therapist approaches treatment can help you manage expectations and plan accordingly.

6. *What is your success rate?*

Success *can* be measured in mental health, so don't let providers brush this one off. Some therapists may have clear data showing success and others might have more anecdotal information. How they answer this question about their past cases is likely how your case will end up.

7. Therapy by its very nature is deeply personal. It is therefore important to choose a therapist that is a good fit and with whom you feel comfortable. Additionally, the relationship between the therapist and client is critical to the success of the treatment. [[What Makes a Good Therapist](#)]

8. Lastly, take notes during this treatment planning huddle. Your therapist should be taking notes too. You should both end up with the same plan and each of you gets held to it.