

Common Sources to Find a Therapist

1. Psychology Today or GoodTherapy therapist directory
2. Word of mouth through families and friends
3. Recommendations by your doctors
4. Referrals through your insurance company
5. Employment Assistant Program (EAP) benefits from your employer
6. Google research

Why Is It So Difficult to Find a Therapist

There are many reasons finding a therapist can be difficult. One primary reason is that **people receiving therapy are not actively advertising it**. Therapy is a very private matter that people don't usually talk about. It is also important to keep in mind that a therapist could work out perfectly for one person but not another, because each of us benefit optimally with different therapeutic styles. For instance, a therapist with a warm and gentle style might work better for people who are new to therapy as opposed to a therapist with an intensely direct style. As a result, word of mouth referral is a great starting point, but it is advised that you take advantage of the free consultation that most therapists offer to feel them out for yourself.

Insurance and EAP

Generally speaking, insurance companies have a large pool of in-network therapists that they can match you with based on your presenting issues. There are many benefits of using your insurance, such that it can save you money because your service will be covered by your insurance; and it can save you time because you do not have to research the therapists.

EAP usually covers a certain number of sessions and your employer will cover the costs. Because EAP only allows for a limited number of sessions, it works great for people with a short-term counseling need, but it might not work for people who need longer-term therapy. Even so, EAP still has a great benefit in that you can choose to continue with your EAP therapist with out-of-pocket pay when the allowable number of sessions is exhausted. It often takes a few sessions to know whether the therapy is working or not working. So EAP is a really great option because you can try out the EAP therapist for a few sessions to decide whether therapy is working without having to pay out of pocket.

Google Reviews or Yelp Reviews

Generally, therapists have few reviews on the internet because it is unethical, and in some states even illegal, to request reviews. Ethically, therapists do not solicit testimonials from current clients, who could be in an emotionally vulnerable state that makes them susceptible to the influence of other people. Legally, client confidentiality should be honored and protected at all times.

A general rule of thumb is to read the online reviews, both positive and negative, with caution. A therapist with many positive reviews could be truly effective and has succeeded in assisting his or her clients to achieve a life-changing moment. However, a large number of recent reviews could also be a cause for ethical concerns.

Google Reviews or Yelp Reviews

Importantly, a therapist cannot respond to a negative review because he or she is still legally bound to protect the client's confidentiality. Clients are always encouraged to discuss their concerns with their therapists in person. It can be a great opportunity to resolve disagreement or conflict, especially when conflict management with loved ones is one of the reasons for seeking out counseling service. A negative review does not necessarily indicate a bad service but could be a direct result of the therapist's ethical duty. For example, it is not uncommon to see a medical doctor getting a negative review because she or he declined to prescribe a medication with a highly addictive potential when the client has high susceptibility for addiction. The bottom line is other people's experiences might not necessarily be your experience. You will have to utilize the free consultation to feel out the compatibility between you and the therapists.

How to Tell if The Therapist Is a Good Match?

There are several directions to start with when looking for a therapist:

1. **What brings you to therapy?** Essentially, what are the specific issues you would like to address in counseling? For example, childhood trauma, anger management, addiction, communication difficulty, sexuality concerns, infidelity, couples counseling, parenting challenging, depression, anxiety, work-related stress, suicidal ideation, life transitions, divorce, etc. It is perfectly okay if you don't exactly know what your specific issue is and you just feel like something is off. Many therapists are able to help you to sort this out when you call for your initial consultation.
2. **What treatment approaches would you prefer?** It is perfectly okay if you don't know exactly what treatment interventions will work for you. Many therapists are trained in a variety of treatment approaches, which they will indicate on their website or Psychology Today profile. It's the therapist's job to suggest and explain the treatment approaches to you. Typically, therapists will co-create a treatment plan with you with the proposed treatment approaches and measurable outcomes. This is a good way to help you to track whether the treatment is working for you over time.
3. **What kind of therapist would you like to talk with?** Each one of us prefers a different style and personality. Some therapists are naturally warm and nurturing, some very scientifically-driven and efficiency-oriented, some very direct, some very gentle, some very insightful, some very flexible, some very serious, some very light-hearted, some very blunt, some very inquisitive, some very creative, some very intuitive. Do you prefer they take notes in the sessions or not? Do you care about their gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, age, or religious affiliation? Do you prefer a therapist who has personal experience of your presenting issues? Do you prefer a therapist who is genuinely open to learning about your perspectives, which might be very different from the therapist's own? Do you prefer a therapist that is more relaxed, prepared, or detail-oriented? If you have experiences with therapy in the past, what worked for you and what did not work for you? Going over these questions can increase the chance of finding a compatible therapist when you interview them.