

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ONLINE

THERAPIST



A CLEAR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FIND YOUR PERFECT MATCH

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THE
PATH

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THE INTRO

Searching for the right therapist can be exhausting and time-consuming, especially if you're hoping to see someone via telehealth. Instead of doing a drive-by to see if their office checks out, you'll have to dig deep into their electronic profile to identify if they're a good fit.

The purpose of this guide is to remove the ambiguity from your search to gain clarity on your ideal therapist.

We will explore what you need from a therapist and how to find the right one! The best part: it will be individualized to your unique needs. You'll be prepared for consultation calls and know what questions to ask. Most importantly, you'll be able to *quickly* identify if a therapist is right for you.

Before opening this guide, be prepared with the following:

- 01 calendar for availability
- 02 monthly budget
- 03 insurance information (optional)
- 04 ideas of what you want to work on in therapy

ONLINE THERAPY

Also known as telehealth, involves meeting with a licensed provider through video or phone. Research suggests that online therapy is just as effective as in-person sessions.

PROS

- Less driving time / traffic
- Eliminates anxiety of being seen at a mental health clinic
- No waiting rooms or waiting longer than usual for sessions
- Convenience and flexible scheduling
- Home comforts while in therapy (e.g., tea/coffee, personal couch)

CONS

- Preference for in-person therapy
- Connectivity issues, screens freezing
- Some licensing boards and insurance companies don't allow online therapy
- Difficulty finding reputable providers

As you can see, there are potential negative aspects of online therapy. However, you can find a reputable provider that offers a HIPAA-compliant platform with the right research!

THE TYPES OF THERAPISTS

Phew, now for the most confusing part: what type of therapist do you choose? Although this isn't an exhaustive list, here are some popular ones:

DOCTORAL LEVEL

Licensed Clinical Psychologists (Psy.D or Ph.D.): have more overall education and clinical training than master's-level providers and may charge a bit more. They are also able to provide psychological testing for diagnostic clarification purposes.

MASTERS LEVEL

- Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW): tend to be a bit more affordable compared to PsyD/PhD-level providers.
- Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHC) and Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC): similar to social workers, but in some cases are able to perform assessments.
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT): usually specialize in treating families and couples.

Masters- and doctoral-level providers are able to be trained in similar therapy modalities. For example, social workers and psychologists can both offer Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I).

TYPES OF THERAPY

Okay, now you are ready to look at the different types of therapy. Choosing the right type of therapy may occur within the context of your therapy relationship with your provider. However, it's important for clients to understand the differences between evidence-based modalities and those that are not heavily researched.

Evidence-based treatments (EBTs) are modalities that have been shown in the research to be effective.

Some of the common ones include:

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Dialectal Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Motivational Interviewing (MI)
- Prolonged Exposure (PE)

The type of therapy is identified based on your presenting concerns. For example, if you are struggling to process unresolved trauma, Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) may be a modality of choice rather than Dialectal Behavior Therapy (DBT).

THERAPY MODALITIES

Here are short snippets of each modality. Of course, take into account that these are not exhaustive descriptions:

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT)

focuses on living a more values-based life. Suppressing emotions usually leads to more distress. Highlights mindful behavior, committed action, and focus on personal values

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

altering unhelpful thoughts and behaviors that typically lead to distress

COGNITIVE PROCESSING THERAPY (CPT)

reprocessing trauma in a way that works for your present life

DIALECTAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY (DBT)

learning skills to enhance emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, mindfulness, and distress tolerance

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI)

helps ambivalent individuals make changes to enhance their livelihood

PROLONGED EXPOSURE (PE)

another trauma-based modality with a focus on repeated exposure of trauma experiences, with the notion that fear and anxiety decrease after continual exposure

THE PROS + CONS OF USING

INSURANCE

Finding a provider within your insurance panel can be difficult depending on waitlists.

PROS

Reduced weekly/monthly cost

CONS

Difficulty finding a provider with availability

Some insurances only allow a certain # of sessions

Requires a mental health diagnosis (aka insurance only covers treatment that's deemed a necessity)

Recorded in your permanent medical record (aka less privacy)

May not have much choice in the provider you see

Many providers nowadays are private pay (aka they do not take insurance). Check out the benefits on the next page.

BENEFITS OF

PRIVATE PAY

Now that we know the pros/cons of using insurance, I'm sure you're asking yourself, "well, what are more reasons why providers opt to be private pay?" Here are a few:

<p>Ability to offer sliding scale rates for those who can't afford the full rate of sessions</p>	<p>More flexibility in choosing clients that they love to work with, which helps with treatment outcomes</p>
<p>More likely to get paid for their services in a timely manner. Sometimes insurance companies delay payment or decline payment altogether due to documentation issues</p>	<p>No need for medical diagnoses or worrying about insurance companies dictating treatment length</p>
<p>Less burnout because there is less time working on administrative duties, submitting claims, or not getting paid</p>	<p>Less anxiety relating to confidentiality concerns - submitting PHI to insurance companies</p>

Many providers work fewer hours because they are getting paid better rates. Insurance companies typically do not reimburse provider's full rates, therefore, they have to work more to make a living.

THERAPIST

QUALITIES

Now, the fun part! Think the person in your life that is/was the easiest to talk to and answer these questions:

DURING AND AFTER OUR CONVERSATION I FEEL:

examples: emotions, feelings, experiences, etc.

WHAT I REALLY WANT FROM OUR CONVERSATION IS:

examples: solutions, to be heard, their advice, etc.

I LOVE WHEN THIS PERSON RESPONDS:

examples: with compassion, validation, techniques

NOW FOR DEMOGRAPHICS. THIS PERSON IS:

Age: older | younger | same age
Gender: female | male | nonbinary | transgender | other | not sure
Religion: spiritual | religious | nonreligious
Culture/race: same race/culture as me | different
Other: _____

You might value having a therapist with these qualities. Maybe some of them don't matter too much to you. If it's important, keep this in mind during your search. The next page has 10 popular qualities that most people appreciate about their therapists

10 POPULAR THERAPIST
QUALITIES

Additional qualities that you might look for in a therapist:

- 01 GREAT INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**
empathy, compassion, good listener, warm
- 02 INSPIRED & OPTIMISTIC ABOUT YOUR GROWTH**
they want to work with you, get to know you, and see you grow/heal
- 03 CONSIDERATE OF CULTURE, RELIGION, GENDER, SEXUALITY, ETC**
they take an interest in incorporating these variables into therapy
- 04 TRUSTABLE**
they create a space for trust
- 05 DEVELOPS A TREATMENT PLAN THAT WORKS FOR YOU**
collaboration is their middle name
- 06 KNOWLEDGABLE + EXPERIENCED WITH YOUR ISSUES**
they offer techniques and guidance on how to work towards healing
- 07 VALUE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**
they see you as the expert on your life experiences
- 08 KNOW IF THEY CAN TREAT YOU**
if your concerns aren't in their wheelhouse, they'll refer you
- 09 WILLINGNESS TO GO THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF WITH YOU**
they are there for you especially when you're struggling
- 10 HOLDS YOU ACCOUNTABLE**
good therapy involves you doing work

YOUR THERAPY

GOALS

It's helpful to identify your goals for therapy before meeting a therapist. You'll be able to have a clear idea of what you need to identify the right fit. Unsure of your goals? You've come to the right place!

FACTORS IN MY LIFE I WANT TO CHANGE:

examples: certain relationships, where you are in life

EXPERIENCES, EMOTIONS, OR FEELINGS I WANT TO INCREASE:

examples: safety, feeling content, exercise

EXPERIENCES, EMOTIONS, OR FEELINGS I WANT TO DECREASE:

examples: depression, sadness, anxiety

AT THE END OF THERAPY, I HOPE TO:

Use this while on the phone with therapists during free consultations. You'll be able to convey your goals in a clear manner to ensure the therapist is able to help you

THE SEARCH

Searching for a therapist doesn't have to be time-consuming.
Simply follow these steps:

01

Search on PsychologyToday, TherapyDen, or a general search for a provider who is licensed in your state. Example: if you live in Arizona, you'll search for therapists licensed here. (FYI: Your therapist can live in another state. They just have to be licensed in your state).

02

Creep their professional social media. Yes, I said it. You want to ensure their vibe checks out. Get to know them and the clientele they typically see.

03

Revisit the Therapist Qualities and Goals worksheets. Do these therapists align with what you've written down? Are they within your budget? Do they offer a sliding scale?

04

Attempt to schedule at least 3 consultations in one week. This way, you can compare each therapist and choose the one you enjoy the most. Try to be intentional with the therapists that you call to ensure you choose the one that's best for you.

05

Once you find someone you like, you'll want to schedule an intake with them. There are a few questions to keep in mind! See the next page for ones you won't want to miss.

IMPORTANT

QUESTIONS

Some questions that you'll want to ask. Some might not apply, so place a checkmark next to the ones that are most important to you

- Are you planning on moving anytime soon or leaving the practice?
- What is your policy on clients who disclose suicidal thoughts, ideation, or plans?
- How comfortable are you incorporating my spirituality into treatment?
- Are you trauma-informed?
- Will you tell me if I'm getting better?
- Policy for communicating between sessions?
- What can I expect for our first session?
- Do you self-disclose as a therapist? Will I know anything about you?
- I am kind of nervous about starting therapy. How do you usually help people feel comfortable?
- How often do you take time for yourself? Are you burnout?
- How long have you been practicing?
- What is the general structure of a therapy session?
- Are you experienced in ___ (your issue)? How would you treat it?
- Do you challenge your clients?
- Do you require homework or practice in between sessions?
- How long does therapy last?
- Can you tell me about your clinical training?
- Is your license active?
- Will I have an appointment every week at the same time?
- Do you plan to operate through telehealth indefinitely? I don't live close by.
- What happens if clients are upset or offended by something said in the session? How do we resolve it?
- What are the procedures if we realize we aren't a good fit?