

If you recognize the need for a therapist and don't have the assistance of a medical professional, reflect on the following and be ready to provide some of this information during your consultation:

1. What is your most pressing concern?
2. Would you feel most comfortable taking to a male or a female?
3. Have you had any experiences in therapy that may affect your ability to work with a new therapist?
4. Are you looking for a long-term or short-term therapeutic engagement?
5. What is a non-negotiable trait you MUST have in a therapist?
6. Are there values that you want to share with or have your therapist be open to?

You should know:

Most Mental Health Professionals are required to complete a number of continuing educational credits per year in order to maintain their license. Additionally, each profession has its own regulations and their own board through the Division of Consumer Affairs. You can access that board directly, or ask that your provider for their contact information.

**Some important things to learn about BEFORE your first appointment:**

How long has he been in practice?

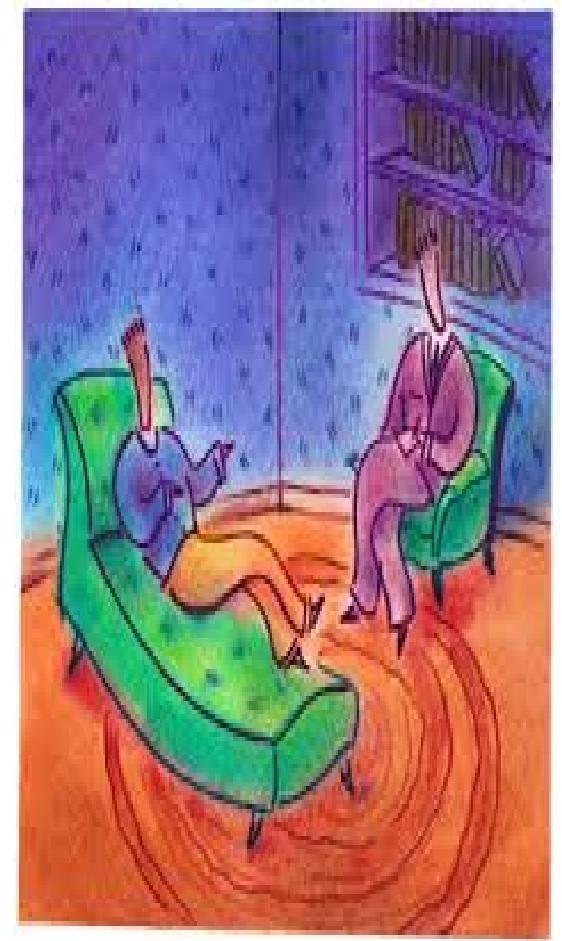
What is her area of specialty?

Has he completed any post-graduate training in your area of need?

Is she comfortable dealing with your specific issue?

Would he make a referral to a better-suited professional if the need presented itself?

Trust your intuition. If the conversation during the consultation was forced or uncomfortable, interview other professionals. The therapist's tools are simple, listening deeply, asking questions that bring you to insight and the ability to assist in the creation of the life you want. As a CONSUMER you have a right to expect no less than those basic skills.



**What to Ask  
When Looking for  
a Counselor**

# Getting the RIGHT Professional

There are many articles that provide guidance related to WHEN to get a therapist. Unfortunately, we are often left to figure the rest out on our own. The following is intended as assistance on how to go about looking for and identifying the right professional to treat or address your needs.

There are many reasons why anyone would benefit from a therapist. Those reasons play a big part in determining the right therapist for you.

If a medical professional recommended that you seek psychotherapy, ask them for the following information:

1. A clear statement of why they think you need therapy
2. Do they have a therapeutic modality or a specific therapist they would recommend?
3. Do they want updates from the therapist?
4. Do they foresee a need for medication?

The answers provided by the medical professional recommending this service will serve as a springboard from which to launch your search.

When calling to make an appointment, ask for a free over the phone

consultation to appraise the therapist's fit to your needs. Most competent therapists will provide a 10-15 minute consultation before the first appointment.

Use the consultation to interview the professional. It is important that you behave as a CUSTOMER or CONSUMER. Would you allow a painter into your house without first learning a bit about them? The same applies here. Rapport, level of comfort and the ability to build trust are essential to successful treatment.

Here are some major points to find out:

Is the person licensed in NJ?

What is their license?

Do they have a specialty or post-graduate training and does it apply to your issues?

**Mental Health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community.**

World Health Organization, 12/2013



Keep in mind that Mental Health Professionals are referred to by many titles. There are 2 major categories to choose from:

Psychiatrists: Who for the most part, dispense and manage medication.

Psychologists, Therapists, Clinical Social Workers, Counselors: These professionals differ in the field of study but all (so long as they are State Licensed) are equipped to conduct treatment that lead to psychological, emotional or behavioral health.