

How to Find a Therapist



7 steps to find the right therapist for you:
learn how to start your search, narrow
your options, and evaluate compatibility

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7 steps to find the right therapist for you

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Where to start

Finding a therapist that is right for you can feel like a daunting task, especially if it's your first time working with a therapist. Taking the time to find the right therapist for you can be the difference between a successful growth experience and a frustrating waste of time and money. To make the search easier, you'll need to consider your goals, the qualities you are looking for in a therapist, and what types of therapeutic modalities you might want to explore. This resource will provide seven steps to help you find the therapist that is the best fit for you.

Step 1: Know Your Goals

Before beginning your search for a therapist, take some time to think about your goals. What do you hope to gain from the experience? Are you seeking assistance with a particular issue, such as depression, anxiety, relationship challenges, recovering from a traumatic experience? Are you looking for help navigating life changes?

There are [many valid reasons](#) for seeking therapy, and having a clear understanding of what you want to get out of the process can help you find a practitioner who can meet your needs. What's most important for your growth and development at this time in your life? Remember, you don't have to be in crisis to benefit from therapy. Depending on your situation and the type of support you're seeking, different therapists and treatment methods may be more suitable at different points in your life.



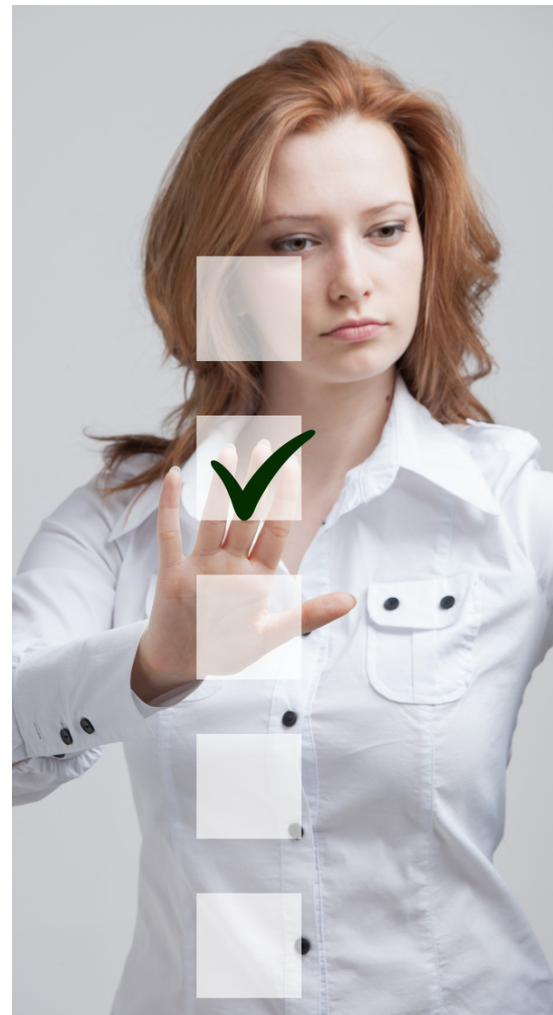
Step 2: Know What You Are Looking For in a Therapist

Before you begin your search, it's important to have a clear idea of what you're looking for in a therapist. While the most important aspect of a therapeutic relationship is the trust, comfort, and overall dynamic between the two parties, there may be some specific characteristics that are particularly important to you.

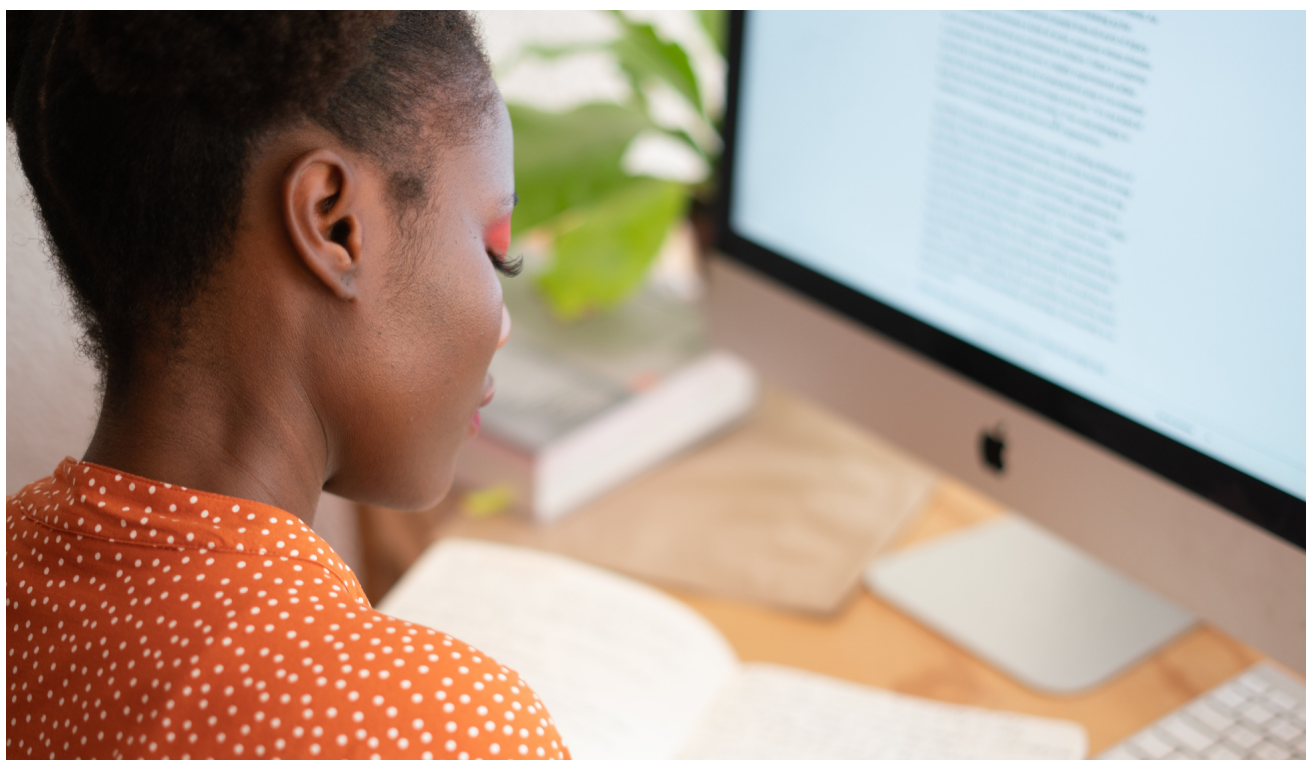
Consider whether any of these qualities are important for your sense of safety or comfort:

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Race
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Cultural background
- ✓ Communication style
- ✓ Therapeutic approach
- ✓ Experience and credentials

Additionally, you should decide if you would prefer an in-person or [online therapist](#). Keep an open mind at this stage, but know which qualities are most important as you begin your search.



When looking for a therapist, you may want to consider the type of therapy they offer, their qualifications, and their areas of expertise. It's helpful to have some knowledge of the various therapy modalities available, as each may be more or less helpful for you depending on your goals and needs. To get an overview of some of these modalities, visit [this website](#). If you are particularly intrigued by a certain modality or if someone has recommended one to you, more information can be found on [this website's](#) very comprehensive and descriptive list.



Step 3: Research Your Options

After you have identified your goals and what you are looking for in a therapist, it is time to start researching your options. Check out online databases such as [Psychology Today](#), [GoodTherapy.org](#), and [Open Path Collective](#). You can also ask for referrals from friends, family, your primary care provider or your insurance carrier.

I recommend starting your search on [Psychology Today](#), using any important criteria from step 2 to filter your results. Additionally, you can filter by insurance network, but make sure this information is up-to-date in your initial consultation. It's also important to contact your insurance carrier directly to find out the details of your mental health coverage, such as the number of sessions covered and relevant copays and deductibles.

Once you have narrowed your list of potential therapists, do a Google search to find their website and other databases with information about their practice. During your initial consultation, make sure that all the information you have found is still up-to-date. Finally, read reviews from previous clients to get an idea of the therapist's style and approach.

Step 4: Schedule an Initial Consultation

After narrowing down your list of potential therapists, it's time to schedule an initial consultation. This is a great opportunity to get a feel for the therapist and decide if they are the right fit for you. You can ask questions about their qualifications, style, and methods, as well as any logistical questions. But the main purpose of the conversation is to see if you feel comfortable talking with this person and if you believe you can open up to them.

This conversation is a two-way street. The therapist will share an overview about themselves, their practice and approach, and will ask about your experience and what brings you to therapy. Many of your basic questions will likely be answered in the flow of this conversation, but it's helpful to prepare a list of questions in advance to help you remember and stay present. You can also ask if they have any basic information about their practice and policies that they can send you in advance.

Remember, therapists understand that this is an interview/fit-check process, and just because you scheduled a consultation does not automatically mean you will decide to work with them going forward.



Optional Consultation Questions

Here are some potential questions that may be answered from a therapists' website, information packet, or during the initial consultation:

- How long have you been practicing as a therapist?
- What is your training and education in therapy?
- What is your approach to therapy?
- How much experience do you have in treating my issues and concerns?
- Are sessions in-person, online, or by phone?
- How does medication fit into your practice and approach?
- What does a typical session look like?
- How long are your sessions and how often do you meet with clients?
- How do you handle confidentiality in therapy?
- How do you handle emergencies or crises outside of regular session times?
- What are your policies around cancellation, rescheduling, or missed appointments?
- How do you involve family members or loved ones in therapy, if appropriate?
- What are your fees and do you offer sliding scale options?
- How do you handle insurance coverage or billing?
- What is your policy on electronic communication (e.g. email, text) between sessions?
- How do you address conflicts or difficulties that may arise in therapy?
- How do you measure progress in therapy and how do you involve clients in setting treatment goals?
- How will we determine if therapy is no longer needed?
- Do you have any resources or referrals for clients seeking additional support outside of therapy?
- How do you handle issues of diversity and cultural sensitivity in therapy?
- How do you handle situations where a client may not be a good fit for your approach or style of therapy?

Step 5: Check in With Yourself

After each consultation, you should ask yourself these three questions:

- Do you feel safe with this person and can you open up to them?
- Do they have the skills and ability to help you with your concerns and needs?
- Do you feel that you could form a good connection with them? Is there rapport between the two of you?



After a few initial consultations, it's time to pause and reflect on which therapist felt like the best fit for you. Consider how comfortable you felt with each therapist, whether you felt heard and understood, and whether the logistics of their practice will work for you. At the end of the day, it's important to trust your instincts. Which therapist did you feel most comfortable with? Which practices feels most likely to help you make progress at this point in your life? If you don't feel a connection or don't feel comfortable with anyone you've talked with yet, it's okay to keep looking.

Don't worry if you have multiple solid options and don't know which one to pick — this is a good problem to have! It's helpful to have back up options in the event of scheduling difficulties or if you find the first choice isn't the best fit in the long run.



Step 6: Choose Your Therapist

Now you are ready to make an informed decision about which therapist is right for you. You may find that one therapist is the perfect fit, or you may need to go through the process again to find the right person. It's important to remember that you are not signing a contract, and this does not have to be a permanent decision. In many cases, it can take 3-4 full sessions to really determine whether a therapist is the right fit for you in the long run.

You should feel comfortable communicating that to your therapist and request that you both take some time to evaluate the fit and relationship after those sessions. This is a normal part of the process. If you decide not to continue with that therapist, they will usually be able to give you solid referrals based on your needs and criteria, and their new understanding of you and your goals.





Step 7: Evaluate Fit

You've been to a few sessions now, and you've got the feel for this therapist, their style, and your dynamic together. You've gotten through some of the basic foundation and context sharing and you're starting to get a sense for how this practitioner can help you with your therapy goals.

This is your second check-in point to ask yourself if this is a good fit, or if you should seek out a different therapeutic relationship. In many ways, finding the right therapist is like dating: you might get lucky on the first try, but chances are, you'll want to try a few folks on before you find the one you'll commit to in the long run. Check in with your gut again on this one. How do you feel with this person so far? Start with these questions:

1. Do you feel safe with this person and can you open up to them?
2. Do they have the skills and ability to help you with your concerns and needs?
3. Do you feel a good sense of connection with them? Is there rapport between the two of you?
4. If the process feels slow or challenging, do you still feel positive about your time together and drawn to return?

If you easily answer “yes” to these four broad questions, you can feel confident continuing on the therapeutic journey with this practitioner. If the answer is no, or if you're not sure, you can give it a couple more sessions and if you feel comfortable, share your concerns with the therapist and see if there are some adjustments they can make that will help you get to a “yes.” And if it's just not a good fit, it's fine to let your therapist know you're [ready to move on](#).

Signs that a therapist is a good fit

Check out this [healthline article](#) for more detail on the many signs that a therapist is a good fit for you, but here are some key aspects to consider:

- They actually listen to you
- You feel validated
- They want what's best for you
- They're a strong communicator
- They check in about how sessions and treatment are going
- They take the time to educate themselves
- You view them as an ally
- You feel trust in them
- You notice a change in yourself
- They challenge you—respectfully
- They offer a range of solutions
- They're open to alternatives
- They don't rush your treatment
- They're mindful of all aspects of your identity
- They take a back seat and center your experience
- They give you the tools to do the work
- You can see the value in your work together



The process of finding a therapist who is the right fit for you is an important one, and well worth the effort. Taking the time to consider your goals, what qualities you are looking for in a therapist, and how to evaluate compatibility is essential for finding a therapist who will be able to provide you with the best possible care. By following these 7 steps, you will be well on your way to beginning a productive therapeutic journey.

For a great long-form article that dives deeper into this process, check out [this piece](#) from The Cut.



My therapy goals

Describe what you are wanting to work on in therapy:



What are your top 3 goals for therapy?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What I want in a therapist

Describe the most important qualities you are looking for in a therapist:

As you research options, add details for therapists you'd like to email or call for an initial consultation

Name & Website	Contact Info	Pros	Cons

Consultation Notes [1]

Therapist Name: _____ Date: _____

General Notes:

1. Do I feel safe with this person and can I open up to them?
2. Do they seem to have the skills and ability to help me with my concerns and needs?
3. Do I feel that we could form a good connection? Is there rapport between us?

Consultation Notes [2]

Therapist Name: _____ Date: _____

General Notes:

1. Do I feel safe with this person and can I open up to them?
2. Do they seem to have the skills and ability to help me with my concerns and needs?
3. Do I feel that we could form a good connection? Is there rapport between us?

Consultation Notes [3]

Therapist Name: _____ Date: _____

General Notes:

1. Do I feel safe with this person and can I open up to them?
2. Do they seem to have the skills and ability to help me with my concerns and needs?
3. Do I feel that we could form a good connection? Is there rapport between us?

Consultation Notes [4]

Therapist Name: _____ Date: _____

General Notes:

1. Do I feel safe with this person and can I open up to them?
2. Do they seem to have the skills and ability to help me with my concerns and needs?
3. Do I feel that we could form a good connection? Is there rapport between us?

Consultation Notes [5]

Therapist Name: _____ Date: _____

General Notes:

1. Do I feel safe with this person and can I open up to them?
2. Do they seem to have the skills and ability to help me with my concerns and needs?
3. Do I feel that we could form a good connection? Is there rapport between us?