

Helpful Questions to Ask When Choosing a Therapist



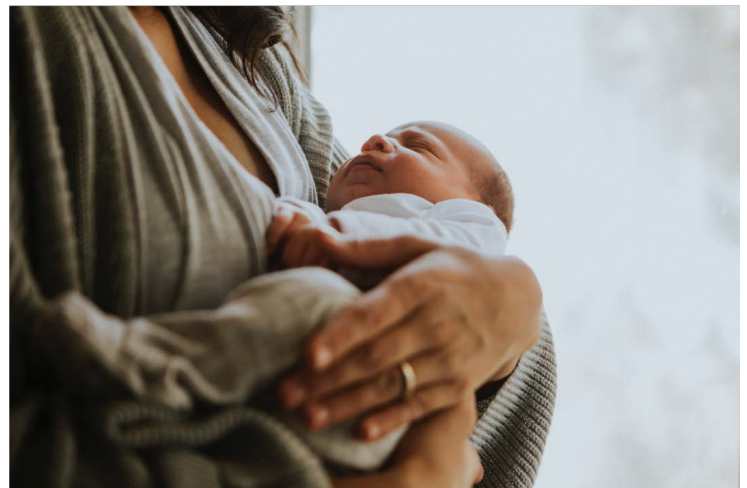
It is important that your therapist makes you feel comfortable and has the right kind of experience to support your mental health goals. Here are some questions you can use to help you in your search.

Questions to Ask the Therapist

1. I have been feeling ____, and I've been having problems with ____. What experience do you have helping patients with concerns like mine?
Ask your provider about their experience helping people in similar circumstances. There are many different areas of specialization in mental health care. Ask your therapist about what conditions they most commonly treat as well as their areas of expertise.
2. What is your typical therapy process like for clients with concerns similar to mine? Different therapists use different styles or treatment methods. Ask your therapist about what timeline they expect for progress and what kinds of goals they set with clients. They should also be able to describe their treatment approach, so you have an idea of what to expect during sessions together.
3. What is the cost per session? What kinds of insurance do you accept?
Be sure you understand the payment structure to avoid an unexpected bill. Some providers offer a payment plan based on your income. Many will accept Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, and/or employer insurance, while others do not accept any form of insurance.
4. Can you prescribe medication, or do you work with a prescriber?
If you think you are interested in taking medication to help support your mental health, it is important that you have access to a qualified psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner who can support your care.

Questions to Ask Yourself

1. Do we seem to agree on the purpose and goals of therapy?
2. Do we seem to agree on the methods they will use to help me reach my goals?
3. Did they understand my questions, or did I feel like I needed to over-explain myself?
4. Did I feel comfortable while speaking to the therapist?
5. Did they answer my questions clearly and make sure I understood?
6. Do I agree with the timeline and suggestions of the therapist?



What Type of Care is Right for Me?

Here are some examples of different types of mental health and support services. You might find a combination of services and programs that are helpful.

Individual Therapy	Group Therapy	Community Mental Health and Social Support	Pregnancy and Postpartum Support Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one sessions between client and patient • Client gets more specific and individualized care • May allow for closer therapeutic relationship between patient and therapist • May be more expensive than group therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple clients are treated at the same time by at least one therapist • Group size can vary depending on the area of support needed • Some therapeutic approaches are designed to be done in a group setting • Clients can learn from each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your provider may refer you to community resources that can support your mental health, emotional and physical needs, as well as the needs of your family. • This could include services such as: Substance use treatment assistance, Lactation support, home visiting nurses, and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple clients engage in a social support group where leader may not be a licensed mental health professional • Meet other pregnant and postpartum parents who are coping with similar challenges • May focus on a specific topic like pregnancy loss or parents experiencing mental health concerns

There are many types of mental health care providers and therapy techniques. While no provider or therapy is necessarily better than another, some might better fit your needs and goals.

- **Master's and Doctoral level therapists hold credentials and licensure such as LCSW, LPC, LMFT or PhD.**
 - They are trained to diagnose and provide therapy for mental health concerns.
 - Some master's level therapists (LCAS) provide both mental health and substance use counseling to individuals with both mental health and substance use challenges.
 - Master's level therapists cannot prescribe medication and may work closely with a provider who can.
- **Psychiatrists are medical doctors (MD)** who have specialized training in mental health. In addition to diagnosing mental health conditions, psychiatrists can prescribe medications.
 - Some psychiatrists also provide mental health therapy. Others may refer you to another provider for therapy while still helping manage your medication as a part of your mental health treatment plan.
 - Some Nurse Practitioners (PMHNP) have specialized training in psychiatry and mental health and can prescribe medication and make referrals to other health professionals for therapy and counseling.

- **Here are some common mental health therapies your provider might discuss with you:**
 - **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** has been found helpful for individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, and substance use challenges among other concerns. CBT involves helping individuals recognize and change their thinking patterns and behaviors.
 - **Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)** is a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and is designed to include both individual and group therapy components. DBT can help with emotional regulation and impulse control.
 - **Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)** focuses on helping individuals address thoughts and behavioral patterns in their interpersonal relationships. IPT involves changing relationship patterns to improve interpersonal functioning.
 - Mindfulness based approaches such as **Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)** use meditation, body awareness, yoga and other techniques to create mindful awareness and reduce stress.
 - **EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)** is a psychotherapy that enables people to heal from the symptoms and emotional distress that are the result of disturbing life experiences such as postpartum PTSD.