

## How to Find the Best Counselor for You!

Finding a counselor can be confusing and frustrating...answering machines, insurance, credentials that look like alphabet soup etc....

Of course, quality is an over-used word but, how SHOULD people select and find a counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist?

1. My first suggestion: Find a counselor, psychiatrist or psychologist who demonstrates concern for your peace of mind...not only in therapy but also where fees are concerned.

Some professionals will require you to pay the entire fee at each visit and then contract to reimburse you later for any amount your insurance may pay. That's no longer the standard for payment. Get a professional who takes your insurance and only requires you to make the co-pay at each visit. That's the current standard.

2. My next suggestion is to find a mental health professional who takes a sincere interest in you as a person and doesn't rush. Some doctors seem to be so disinterested that they seem to push you out the door before you barely get in!

Patience is a quality that one wants when trying to find a psychotherapist, psychiatrist or counselor. You should feel that you've never had someone listen to your concerns so thoroughly.

Your therapist should ask questions that turn on a light bulb in your mind...that Ah Ha! feeling. He should pose important questions relevant to your situation. For example, do you stay...or leave? Or, how well do you communicate anger... Are you living up to YOUR expectations...?

3. Also, this field changes faster than the nightly news. Your counselor or psychologist should attend advanced trainings regularly or s/he will be out of date...AND... so will your therapy.

Frankly, many practitioners often do the minimum advanced training because it cuts into relaxation time.

New treatments may appear that better target your needs or achieve your goals more quickly. In your therapy, you should be able to benefit from many of the same techniques that are provided at state-of-the-art facilities like the Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic and other renowned hospitals.

They include cognitive-behavioral therapy, imaginal conditioning, somatic therapy and the cognitive and reality-based therapeutic approaches. Each treatment method used should be skillfully applied, as appropriate, to provide the best results in the shortest period of time.

This is only possible if your counselor stays on top of important changes by participating in advanced education

4. Look for a concrete demonstration of concern. A No Waiting Policy might be one example of that. It's not a good sign if you arrive at the appointed time... and then are ignored and left to wait.

It's rude too; so... ask if the patients are scheduled so that they don't get backed-up.

Barring an unexpected emergency, you should not have to wait more than 10 minutes.

5. Look for promptness and enthusiasm in providing you with an appointment. Run from those who have the "take a number and wait in line" mentality. Under-staffed and impersonal commercial practices are not sufficiently concerned about you. They will often tell you to wait days or weeks for an appointment...without giving it a second thought!

Your counselor should show concern by providing an appointment in no more than 7 days.

If necessary, they should also be available in the evenings to make it easier on your kids and work schedule.

6. Also, your therapist or psychologist should work seamlessly with your insurance company to take all the billing headaches off your shoulders. The office should do the paperwork for you; after all, you already have too many things to worry about.

As stated previously, you should just have to make your small co-pay at each visit.

Here is a summary of the features to seek:

1. Unhurried visits
2. An up-to-date therapist who can provide many of the same techniques that are used at The Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins and other distinguished institutions
3. An initial appointment provided within a week.
4. All paperwork done for you
5. Evening and day appointments
6. "No Waiting Policy."

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#### About the Author

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