

How to Select A Therapist: A Beginner's Guide

by Nicole Davis

Congrats on your decision to seek out therapy!

confetti toss

I'm a big fan. And as your spiritual awakening unfolds most folks quickly discover that addressing personal issues with a professional is called for. Sometimes the awakening process is initiated by getting help with painful patterns in your life, rather than your kundalini randomly rising or seeing angels as an entry point, if that happens for you.

I know it can be a scary or intimidating subject to approach – we may have internalized stigmas, misinformation, or negative impressions based on stories from others' experiences with it. Or we may harbor some judgment towards ourselves that we're "broken" and need "fixing" therefore therapy is the next logical step. In my opinion, that's not the case even if it feels that way! I've come to the knowledge that we are whole, well, and worthy. Always.

And what therapy can provide for our *human* self is a safe container to peel back the layers of emotional, mental, and spiritual programming we've picked up since childhood that is not rooted in love, telling us all kinds of nonsense. We can get to the root of traumas, come to many realizations and fresh perspectives on the stories we've told ourselves around particular events and relationships with others. And we can learn new tools for moving into more self-sovereignty and groundedness as adults. We can gain new insights and practices for re-parenting our inner child as well...the list goes on!

Therefore, when we make the decision to move forward in seeking professional help for our mental health, it's a big deal. I'm applauding you through the screen!

Going to see a therapist was a game-changer for me during the first phase of my awakening in my mid 20's before I really knew what was occurring in my life. All I knew was that the panic attacks, depression, and anxiety were disrupting my daily life to the point where I couldn't take care of myself anymore, so I had to get to the bottom of things stat! Relatable anyone?

Below I've compiled some of the things that I learned from my journey so that you can jumpstart *your* process easily, and to make the introduction of this new relationship as simple as possible.

Let this bless you and serve you well!

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1) Know YOUR "why" - what you want to heal from (it's good to be specific + name the emotions that come up around it), learn how to navigate and move through, etc. What are you hoping counseling will provide that you cannot find elsewhere? i.e. increase emotional intelligence, healing from trauma, setting boundaries, etc.

2) Know THEIR "why" – when you interview practitioners start there, just as you would if you were interviewing with a potential employer. You may ask what got them started, what keeps them going, what they're excited about right now, etc.

Pro-tip: Did you know that you can schedule a *free* consultation with most Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) and therapists just like you would with a new hairdresser or business coach? Yes, you can! They usually allow for a 15-30 minute consult phone call to see if it's a good fit *before* proceeding and paying for sessions. You'd be surprised at how willing they are to offer this and how few people know to even ask for this.

3) Let's say you're starting from scratch and don't know who to contact just yet, I recommend asking around to friends or colleagues if they have anyone they've worked with or a network they're aware of to find one. Also, most universities have a psychology department that have graduate students who are seeing patients as a part of their program so you could go there for a lower rate. And if you want someone more experienced those departments usually have a roster of therapists certified through their program in the area. Otherwise, ask for referrals out of the network. Sometimes a primary care physician has access to networks as well that can be worth exploring. You never know who knows who.

4) Once you find a few LPC's/therapists to interview (I recommend interviewing at least three), during your interview here are some guiding questions to determine compatibility. Again, they may be pleasantly surprised that you came prepared with questions since most clients don't know how valuable this step is. But just as with any relationship setting up the foundation properly involves addressing the basics first:

- What modality(s) do you specialize in? Cognitive Behavioral, hypnosis, etc.
- One question that's really juicy is to ask them what healing or mental wellness means to them. You might be surprised by the answer. I asked my therapist this during our consult conversation and it was so beautiful what he said:

"I don't think everyone needs therapy; I believe everyone deserves therapy."

- How do you help clients navigate trauma? What are your thoughts on trauma-informed approaches and certifications that are on the rise?
- In sessions how do you help clients process? Do you assign "homework"? Do you like to mirror back? Do you lead with questions or allow the client to lead the session, etc.?
- How do you navigate ethnic specific traumas and systemic issues that clients come in with?
- If you need to discuss how your theology may be either conflicting or supporting the issues that you're dealing with, ask them how they handle religious-specific and/or spiritual conversations.
- What are your thoughts on prescriptions to help treat symptoms or support mental wellness?
- How many sessions per month do you see has the highest "success" rate for clients to reach their wellness goals? Does it depend on the severity of their symptoms?
- How do you approach the conversation when the client either outgrows your approach and/or if the dynamic is no longer "fruitful" for them?
- If this isn't the best fit for both of us can you give me a referral and/or a network to look into where I can find someone?
- Do you offer a sliding scale, flat-rate, or accept insurance?

5) Keep in mind that if you're also experiencing other awakening phenomena such as past-life memories/traumas, psychic gifts coming "online", having E.T. contact, etc. be cognizant that these topics are best served by another kind of practitioner.

Examples: A Spiritual Director, someone who specializes in Energy Medicine, a Reiki Healer, Past-Life Regression Therapist, and the like.

These folks are trained to address those aspects of your being which is typically outside the scope of most psychotherapy. What we are seeing is a lot more spiritually informed therapists but it's good to address how they handle metaphysical conversations so you're not left wondering or feeling alone if you bring up an experience during a session that they cannot speak to directly.

6) As with anyone or anything, use your discernment. There are many wonderful counselors and therapists that you can work with but choose one that you feel safe with, one you can afford, and one who is willing to refer you elsewhere if it's not a good fit after some time passes, etc. Speak up about your goals and what you need, and the right person will become obvious to you.

Blessings on your healing journey!