

# Choosing the “Right” Therapist

The decision to begin therapy can be difficult. Often, people wait until their relationships have reached the point of crisis before seeking help. In a state of crisis, it is often hard to spend the time and energy finding the therapeutic setting that will be most helpful. Here are some suggestions:

1. Seek help sooner rather than later. Don't wait until you feel ready to divorce to try to work on your marriage. Start therapy as soon as you notice you and your partner are not making the changes needed on your own. This applies to any presenting problem: parenting issues, grief and loss, etc.
2. Ask friends, family, and professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.) if they know of a good therapist. Look on [www.TherapistLocator.net](http://www.TherapistLocator.net), a service of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, to find licensed therapists in your area or another reputable therapist directory (e.g. [www.goodtherapy.org](http://www.goodtherapy.org)). Don't be afraid to interview a few to see who might be a good fit. Many therapists will offer a consultation or initial session as a time for you to make a decision.
3. During the interview, ask about licensure, schooling, therapeutic orientation, areas of specialty and participation in their professional organization. Ask about their approach to therapy and what you should expect in the initial sessions. Most importantly, ask questions that relate to the issue that brought you to therapy. If you are seeking couples counseling then a highly qualified play therapist is probably not going to be the right fit, no matter how highly recommended or experienced they are. Also ask about fees and available appointment times.
4. Consider paying out of pocket if you do not find a good fit within your insurance coverage. Research and clinical wisdom have shown that one of the most important factors to the success of therapy is relationship between therapist and client. You are investing in your health and you are worth every penny!
5. Don't give up if it's not what you expected. Therapy can be a comforting experience but it also has challenges. Often new clients will be frustrated by the slow pace of change or the emotional turmoil that comes with exploring difficult issues. Talk to your therapist about your concerns and ask for some guidance. A good therapist will work with you to address these concerns and understand the process of therapy. It can be helpful to ask yourself how committed you are to making therapy work; successful treatment is a team effort. And if all else fails, don't be afraid to try a different therapist.