

# Questions to Ask a New Therapist

The process of finding a new therapist can be a daunting one. When you do find one and make an appointment, it's still important to allow yourself a trial period to determine if they will be a good fit and help you reach your goals. If you're not sure what you're looking for from the relationship, you might limit or delay progress. It's important to vet a new therapist and get to know them, the same as you would any other important person in your life.

## Where did you go to school? Are you licensed?

When asking this question, you're not asking to find out if they attended an elite university, but rather to gain a better understanding of their training and experience. You want to ensure they have obtained the degrees they are advertising. If they say they are licensed, make sure to confirm this information as well. Every state has a mental health licensure board. You can easily type the license type they mention and then "license verification" for their state into Google to confirm.

## How Do You Approach Therapy?

This question will help set expectations for the relationship. They may provide a bit more context **into the modalities they employ** and their overall therapeutic philosophy. If you're looking for a therapist after attending Onsite Workshops, you might ask if they're familiar with experiential therapy if you found these techniques helpful. This will also provide an opportunity for them to share their specialties and certifications. A general warning, if someone tells you they specialize in everything, we'd encourage you to be hesitant. A person cannot be an expert in EVERYTHING. Make sure to have an understanding of what you think you might need, and see if their specialty aligns with your goals.

## What is your availability?

If you're a great fit, but can't find a consistent time to meet with your therapist, you might need to look for someone with more flexibility in their schedule.

## What is the cost? Do you ever work from a sliding-scale?

We believe that therapy is a worthwhile investment. It's important to be sure you have a thorough understanding upfront of costs. Make sure to look at and inquire about initial paperwork to ensure you understand the fee structure within and outside of sessions.

- *Do they charge extra for email communication or weekend texts/calls/extra sessions off hours?*
- *What is the policy around cancelling a session?*
- *How often do they suggest meeting?*

If cost is a prohibiting factor for you, be sure to ask if there are circumstances in which they might work from a sliding scale.

## Have you worked with people similar to me?

In an initial session, share a bit about what brought you to therapy and what you hope to gain from the relationship. Then ask if they've helped other people with situations and issues similar to your own. Similar to specialty, just confirm their experience aligns with your goals.

## Are you now, or have you ever been in therapy?

We believe that it is vital for therapists to do their own work. We believe in mental health professionals creating the space on a consistent basis to work with another mental health professional. They show up as better versions of themselves as a result of addressing their own issues. Your relationship will be safe and more effective if you find a therapist who is committed to doing their own work.

## What is your faith background?

You may be interested to know what worldviews your therapist personally holds and that they might bring to your relationship. It is worth discussing the role faith may or may not play into your time with them. You may not want to discuss faith at all in your sessions, or you may feel it will be an integral part of your process.

## **Do my goals feel realistic and attainable through this relationship?**

The first few sessions are going to consist of fact-gathering on the part of your therapist. After you've shared your current struggles, desired areas of growth, and past experiences, your therapist will have a better handle on what they can and can't offer you through the relationship. It's important to be upfront with them to determine if what they offer will serve you well. It's also important for them to confirm whether your goals are realistic and within the scope of their professional expertise.

## **How long do clients typically work with you?**

Longer does not always mean better. This questions will simply illuminate more around their therapeutic philosophy. Psychoanalysts can keep clients for decades, whereas EMDR, Intensive Short Term Dynamic Psychotherapy, EFT, etc are briefer, and perhaps more concentrated experiences.

## **Do you feel like we'll be a good fit?**

Research has shown that the therapist/client connection directly impact a patient's progress and success. If the two of you are not a good fit, don't worry. It's okay to try again. (And again and again, until you find the right fit!)

Finding a therapist may take a few tries. Don't get discouraged! You want to find a therapist with whom you can show up fully as yourself and partner with to achieve your emotional and mental health goals.