

## Hiring a Therapist

You've recognized that your friends and family often tell you what they think you want to hear. You realize that you need an objective perspective. Now the question is where can you go for guidance? A qualified therapist is the logical answer. But, how do you find a good one? Think about this: If you suspected that you had skin cancer, you wouldn't randomly select a dermatologist from the Yellow Pages. You would, most likely, ask for a referral. You would seek someone who has extensive training with a solid reputation for achieving positive results. The same criteria should apply when selecting your therapist.

After collecting names of referrals, make appointments to interview the potential therapists. Be aware of what to look for. First off, a therapist should provide an environment that allows you to feel safe, a place where you can say whatever you want to say and know that whatever you say will be met with positive regard. While interviewing therapists, find out their therapeutic modality (there are hundreds). Are you comfortable with their style?

For example, a solution-focused therapist helps clients envision their future without problems, asking them to define what isn't working, encouraging them to continue to practice what is. This therapeutic modality focuses on the future, not the past, and defines what changes the client wants to make.

My counseling sessions are mixed with listening to clients and teaching them. I teach them how to recognize healthy vs. unhealthy behavior, how to communicate more effectively; including the difference between assertive, aggressive and passive behavior and, during disagreements, how to "fight fair." Many relationships fall short because of the games people play. I encourage clients to speak "in their adult," to say what they mean, mean what they say, and to follow through. I help them build self-esteem, allowing them to explore who they are, what gives them joy and what is their purpose.

Hiring the right therapist is a challenge. But, you have taken that first step toward positive change by seeking help. Now, plan to spend as much time in selecting a therapist as you do in making other important decisions. Once you have found a good fit, you will open up the possibilities of becoming the person you were meant to be.

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