

## How to Find a Therapist

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Therapy is a collaboration so starting with trust, safety, and comfort is important. The goal is to find someone who puts you at ease and has the experience and training to help you meet your treatment goals.

### Consider your goals

- It can help if you are able to describe what's been bothering you or what you hope to improve in your life.
  - Better sleep, decreasing anxiety, coping with loss, decreasing loneliness, increasing motivation, improving relationships, reducing alcohol use, etc.
- It is also completely fine to be unsure about what you need. A good therapist can work with you to set and achieve your goals together.

### Consider your preferences

- Do you have gender, cultural, age, religious, or other preferences for a therapist?
- Some people want someone familiar with their community or who has a similar background. This may or may not mean that they are a member of your community but have the training and experience to understand your perspective and/or life experience.
- As a patient, you may want to ask yourself whether you are looking to vent, seeking to understand yourself better, or hoping for solutions-focused suggestions for change.

### Begin your search

- Ask friends, family, or a trusted medical provider for recommendations. Many larger medical clinics have behavioral health services as part of their primary care team.
  - There are a lot of online mental health search tools, many of which let you narrow down your search by insurance and personal preferences. Therapists will often have
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their own websites that can be a great source of detailed information about them and their work.

- Call your insurance company to get a list of in-network providers or search your insurance's website for this information.
- Using your goals as a guide, call or email therapists who look promising. Briefly explain your reason for seeking therapy, indicate scheduling preferences if you have them, and include your insurance information and any other 'must have' preferences.

### **Interview potential therapists**

- Many therapists will offer a free introductory consultation, usually 15-30 minutes, to see if it is a mutual match. Shop around!
- Don't feel obligated to agree to see the person if you have any reservations - even if you've already started therapy. A good fit is very important.
- If you do find a provider you like but who does not have current openings, ask about being put on their waitlist.

### **Understand and confirm your insurance coverage**

- Information on insurance and therapist websites can be out of date. It is important to confirm benefits and coverage for a specific therapist **before** you begin care to avoid unexpected costs.
- If you find a therapist you like who is not in-network for your plan, you may have 'out of network benefits' where a portion of the costs would be covered by insurance. Call your insurance company to find out what percentage they would cover, and what percentage would be your responsibility.

It's important to note that providers who are out-of-network for your plan will rarely bill your insurance. This typically means that you would pay the full cost of the treatment yourself, and then seek partial reimbursement directly from your insurance company.

