Finding a Therapist Suited to Your Needs

by ERIC PATTERSON

Finding a Great Depression Therapist

Depression has become too much of your life to ignore any longer. You can't sleep, eat or focus. Your mood is worse and you find yourself either crying or being irritated by the people around you. You have tried to alleviate your depression on your own and with support from family and friends but you realize it is time for some professional help.

Many people benefit from therapy and counselling every day. A therapist can look at your life and experiences with a fresh perspective and provide you with skills to improve your mood and overall well-being. For you, counselling is something new. Chances are, you feel a bit apprehensive about the whole therapy experience. Rather than use this reluctance as an excuse to delay therapy, use it as motivation to find the best therapist available for you.

Find your Best Fit

Remember that there is a wide range of depression therapists available. Here are some tips to find your best fit.

- **Get educated**. There are many types and styles of therapists. Most therapists will have a graduate degree in counselling, social work or psychology. Some will have a state license, which means that they have a certain level of education as well as practical experience. An additional benefit of a licensed therapist is that they need to maintain continuing education and are held to a code of ethics in practice. This means they will be well versed in new information and conduct themselves professionally.
- **Consider styles.** From psychoanalytic and cognitive behavioral to person-centered and dialectical behavioral, there is a huge range of therapeutic styles that you may encounter. Do some research and decide what direction you would like your therapy to go. Style of therapy can dictate factors like frequency and length of treatment.
- **Private practice versus community agency.** Availability of services will depend on your location but there are pros and cons to discuss about each setting. A private practice usually means that one therapist operates independently. This can provide you with more attention and an individualized experience. In an agency setting, you may walk into a busy waiting room, which can be overwhelming. Many agencies, though, offer multiple services so access to psychiatric care or case management can be more streamlined with better communication between providers.

- **Payment.** Therapists are highly trained professionals and therapy paid out-of-pocket can become expensive quickly. If you have insurance, consult with your carrier about local therapists that accept their coverage. Learn about copays and deductibles for mental health care. If you do not have insurance, don't give up. Many therapists will work on a sliding scale and community agencies may have charity funds for people in your situation.
- **Interview.** You wouldn't leave your child with someone you have never talked to and you would never let a stranger work on your car. Interview your therapist over the phone or in person to gather more

information. Ask about their style, expertise, experience and interventions used to help someone with your symptoms. See how you communicate with each other and if there is the start of a therapeutic alliance.

Conclusion

Starting therapy can be an unnerving experience. Reduce your worries by understanding what is available and what you are looking for in a therapist. If your therapist is not working out, discuss your reservations in session and consider a referral. Keep in mind that your therapist wants to lessen your depression as much as you do.