

How to Find a Good Therapist...According to a Therapist

By [Kara Cuzzone](#) | Jan. 11, 2020

If finding a great therapist were easy, a *lot* more people would be in therapy right now. That's not to say there aren't highly qualified, helpful therapists out there. It's just that beyond finding someone in your area who is licensed and available and takes your insurance, you also need to find someone you mesh with. It can be daunting, especially if you aren't emotionally feeling 100 percent. So we turned to psychotherapist [Lori Gottlieb](#), MFT, author of *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone: A Therapist, Her Therapist, and Our Lives Revealed*, for her best advice on hunting down the right one for you.

1. Ask Friends and Family for a Referral

You probably have a friend or family member who talks openly about going to therapy. Gottlieb suggests using that to your advantage and asking them for a referral. If you're not comfortable going to the same therapist as your best friend or brother, you can ask them for a list of colleagues they'd recommend. It's way more effective than Google, Gottlieb says.

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2. Browse Therapists' Websites for Clues

If you *do* want to take the Google route, be strategic. Therapists will often give you a sense of their therapeutic approach on their website, Gottlieb explains. "Some will also tell you about the kinds of patients they see, so find out if they treat other people with the kinds of issues you're dealing with. For example, if you're struggling with anxiety, you might want to choose a therapist who mentions treating anxiety disorders on their website." (*Psychology Today* is great for this too.)

3. Make Sure the Therapist Can Speak to Your Identity

If you're dealing with female-focused stuff, like issues about fertility or prior trauma with an old boyfriend, think about whether you'd feel more comfortable seeking out a woman, Gottlieb suggests. Similarly, if you want to talk about experiences related to your sexuality or race, you might want to seek out someone who identifies similarly.

4. But Remember, You Aren't Looking for a Friend

"I think the most important thing for people to know about choosing a therapist is that you're not looking for a friend," Gottlieb emphasizes. She notes that while some people might think they want a counselor who's close in age or feels similar to them, that's not always the best idea. "This experience is about going to somebody who can help you see yourself in a way that's very different from how your friends and family talk to you," Gottlieb continues. Look for a fresh perspective, not someone you can see a movie with.

5. Know That It's All About Personality

Ultimately, it all comes down to whether or not you work well together, Gottlieb tells us. "You want to have a personality that's a good fit with yours, and it doesn't really matter whether they are similar to you in terms of what their lives are like. What matters much more is how you guys get along in the room." So pick a therapist, meet with them in person and see how the first session or two go.

6. Treat Your First Session Like a Consultation

The first session is your opportunity to see whether or not this whole thing feels like the right fit for you. "Ask yourself, 'Do I feel comfortable talking to this person?' and 'Did I feel understood?' If so, go back for a second session," Gottlieb says. But if it doesn't feel quite right, you don't have to feel obligated to stick with the first therapist you see. Just like dating, you might have to keep searching until you find someone you really connect with.

8 Signs That Your Therapist Is Wrong for You

By [Kate Harveston](#) | Aug. 8, 2019

Was Dr. Melfi the right fit for Tony Soprano? Dr. Leo Marvin for Bob? Hannibal Lecter for...anyone? That's not really for us to decide (well, for the last one we can say definitively not). When it comes to patient-therapist relationships, it's really up to *you*, the patient, to decide whether you feel your therapist is right for you. If you're on the fence and not quite sure, here are eight signs that the professional you're in session with might not actually be ideal for you.

1. Your Therapist Is a Lousy Listener

Your first appointment with your new therapist should center around the issues that brought you through their door in the first place. If you find your therapist missing major points you wanted to address, looking at their phone or spending more time talking than you, it might mean they're not truly *listening*. So, when it comes down to your precious time and money, it might not be worth booking another appointment just so you can try to hammer home why you came there in the first place.

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2. They Minimize Your Experiences

Validating your emotions marks the first step in dealing with them effectively. If your therapist tries to minimize the things that brought you in—aka gaslighting you—it might be in your best interest to move on from that professional and find someone who takes what you say seriously.

3. You Don't Really Like Them as a Person

This may seem trivial, but don't disregard the importance of finding a therapist you *like as a person*. In the words of Tarik Shaheen, M.D. and [founder and CEO of Iris Telehealth](#) Telepsychiatry: "Over time, you should build a strong and valuable relationship with them as you work toward meeting your agreed upon goal. The more colloquial, straightforward answer is that, in short, you should like your therapist. If you don't, chances are that you're not going to achieve the results you are looking for."

4. You Don't Feel Safe with Them

A qualified therapist creates a safe space in their office where no topic is taboo. If you feel you cannot mention your innermost feelings, ask yourself why you feel unsafe doing so. If you feel this way because you're not at the stage where you're ready to process traumatic events, that's fine, but if it's because the treatment specialist gives you a bad vibe, look elsewhere. Therapists need to establish trust with patients by maintaining their own boundaries and avoiding oversharing their own experiences. Ineffective therapists flirt inappropriately (which may prove grounds for harassment), share too much about their private lives and give you the heebie-jeebies. Trust your gut.

5. They Insult Your Intelligence

Regardless of what brought you to therapy, you know more about your frustrations and challenges than many experts. Yes, your therapist has specialized expertise from years of training. They should not gloat about this with you in session, though. If you tell them a certain herb helps improve your depression, and they dismiss this as bunk, ask yourself some questions: Are they genuinely concerned about your improvement or are they more in love with their own favorite treatment regimen to consider alternatives?

6. They Don't Challenge You to Grow

Should your therapy appointments stretch endlessly or should they end after a set number of sessions? Considering the high price of mental health care, most patients and their care team hope for a speedy recovery. However, if you find your sessions going on ceaselessly while you experience no improvement in outlook, you may need to look for a therapist who challenges you more. Some people do need lifelong support, but many with mental health issues do recover and lead happy lives. If you no longer receive any benefit, discuss finding a new caregiver with your team or ask yourself if you're ready to go it on your own.

7. They Behave Unethically

Finally, all **therapists must follow a strict code of ethics** when it comes to matters like establishing friendships or romantic relationships with patients and maintaining confidentiality. While you may feel badly for ditching your therapist if you have no personal problem with them, remember, when it comes to protecting your mental health, your needs take priority.

8. Letting Your Therapist Go

Telling a therapist you don't intend to return can feel empowering or, on the flip side, incredibly intimidating. Whether you directly confront them or quietly ghost them matters not—what matters is protecting your mental health. If your current care provider exhibits any of the seven signs above, it may be time for an intervention—and a new counselor.