



Published on *Go Ask Alice!* (<https://goaskalice.columbia.edu>)

[Home](#) > [How to find a therapist](#)

How to find a therapist ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am trying to find a therapist. I have to go in-network for my health insurance to cover it, so I have this long list of therapists, but I don't know anything about them. Do you have any suggestions as to how to go about choosing one and/or questions to ask? Is there a "Go Ask Alice!" answer I could read for this info? I found my last therapist through the recommendation of a colleague at work and another through my school's counseling service. Now I need to spread my wings and find a professional therapist on my own! Yikes!

Thanks for any help you can give me!!!!!!!!!!!!

Answer

Dear Reader,

Dedicating time to explore your thoughts and feelings with the help of a professional can be rewarding and helpful. The process of finding someone who is a good match for you, however, may be daunting. Just as you may not connect with everyone you meet at work, or at a party, the same can be true when meeting with a therapist. Given the nature of a therapeutic relationship, it makes sense to devote energy to this process so that you can feel confident and comfortable as you embark on your work together. And, as you guessed, *Go Ask Alice!* does indeed have some questions you can review.

In the [Emotional Health](#) ^[2] section of the *Go Ask Alice!* archives, you can find lots of information that might help you refine what you might like to explore with your future therapist. In addition, [Finding low-cost counseling](#) ^[3] has a brief list of things you could consider when you meet potential mental health professionals, with a focus on low-cost counseling options. This might be useful in case you decide to pay out-of-pocket or just want a longer list of therapists to try out. If you have an established relationship with a health care provider, you could also ask for their recommendations. Finally, you can do a little research online and learn about a clinician's background, education, and special areas of expertise before meeting with them.

Once you've picked out a potential therapist, it may help to call or make a visit to their office. Consider asking some questions, including:

- Are they certified or credentialed by any professional programs or associations?
- What type of therapy [4] do they practice? What can you expect from a typical session?
- What are their areas of expertise?
- Do they have experience working with the areas you'll want to discuss?
- What are their fees? And, do they take your insurance?
- What is their availability and are they able to schedule appointments at times that match your needs?

Adapted from the American Psychological Association [5].

It's wise to listen to your intuition as you speak with potential therapists on the phone or in-person. Do you feel comfortable sharing with them? Do you feel supported? Do you feel that they're a good listener? Do they seem comfortable speaking honestly? Are the surroundings of the office (the waiting area, neighborhood, entrance, paintings/furniture in the individual office space) putting you at ease or is the environment not quite right for you (this may sound inconsequential, but it can affect your experience)? Do you feel there is a sense of privacy in the office space(s)? In addition, it's a good idea to contact your insurance company to determine exactly what mental health services are covered. If your insurance doesn't cover what you need, you could ask the therapist if they have a sliding-scale policy (when what you pay is based on your income).

Remember, you're collecting information to assess if this person is going to meet your needs and facilitate your process. You're paying for this service, so while you may feel intimidated or awkward asking questions, ask away! If you don't connect with one therapist, it's commonplace to try out someone else — it really is as simple as that. Many compassionate and skilled therapists are out there and it may take some time to determine who will be a good match for you. With some effort though, you can find someone with whom you can develop a meaningful therapeutic relationship.

Alice!

Category:

Emotional Health [6]

Counseling [7]

Related questions

Concerned about confidential counseling [8]

Soothing therapy tensions [9]

My friend needs counseling [10]

Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [11]

Mental Health Services (CUIMC) [12]

Published date:

Oct 10, 2002

Last reviewed on:

Mar 29, 2019

Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
 - Content Use
 - Media Inquiries
 - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
 - Licensing Q&As
 - Get Alice! on Your Website
 - Full Site Syndication
 - Link to Go Ask Alice!

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/how-find-therapist>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/how-find-therapist>
- [2] <http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/emotional-health>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/finding-low-cost-counseling>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/types-of-therapists>
- [5] <https://www.apa.org/topics/choose-therapist>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/emotional-health>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/counseling>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/concerned-about-confidential-counseling-0>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/soothing-therapy-tensions-1>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/my-friend-needs-counseling-0>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>